DESTINY.

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OR,

THE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MARRIAGE," AND "THE INHERITANCE."

"What's in a name?"—SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DESTINY.

CHAPTER I.

Some time elapsed ere Edith could compose her spirits sufficiently to quit the spot, once the scene of so much youthful pleasure—now the silent witness of broken vows and departed joys. At length, though with sad and abstracted mind, she was slowly retracing her steps homewards, when her attention was roused by hearing the horrid accents of Mr M'Dow calling loudly to some one to draw to a side—for *any sake* to draw to a side. Looking up, she perceived the cause of alarm was a wood-cart which obstructed the way, and arrested the progress of Mr

M'Dow's gig. Some trees lay felled by the side of the road, and increased the difficulty of advancing. The gig was evidently ill-driven and overloaded, containing his own bulky person, and those of two ladies of large dimensions—the hapless Amailye prefixed to the whole. Edith saw with dismay that escape was impossible, unless she had actually turned round and fled, which her native politeness would not permit her to do. The road was narrow, and whether from awkwardness on the part of Amailye or her master, the gig was in such a position, that for the cart to pass without upsetting it was impossible.

Mr M'Dow was evidently in great agitation at the alarming predicament in which he had placed himself. "This driving is really a most ticklish business," said he, with a very red face, "and my beast has not been much used to it—and where there's ladies in the case, it's really—hem—I think my best plan is to get out, Mrs M'Dow, and lead Amailye past the cart—just take the reins for a moment, my dear," to his

lady—"just sit still; there will be no danger for you, once I'm out."

And thereupon Mr M'Dow descended, and taking Amailye by the hair of the head, he dragged her past the cart; and with the sense of safety his courage and spirits rose to their usual pitch.

"Your most obedient, Miss Malcolm; I really did not recognise you just at first—this might have been a serious *rancounter*, for this is an awkward turn of road—but as it is, it has turned out very well—this is a most pleasant meeting. Allow me to introduce Mrs M'Dow to you.—Colina, my dear, this is Miss Malcolm of Glenroy, whom you've often heard me mention." Mutual bows were of course exchanged. "And this is Miss Violet Muckle, my wife's youngest sister; we are but just come off our marriage *tower*, which was a most delightful one! We were most fortunate in weather—scarcely a drop of rain the whole time. We spent some days in Edinburgh—it's really a most *shuperb* city! Mrs M'Dow was much pleased with it; but I regretted that I hadn't thought of

procuring letters to some of the principal literary characters there. Mrs M'Dow has rather a turn that way, and Miss Violet, we allege, is half a blue stocking. The Edinburgh ladies, it is said, are all rather blue." Then, in a tone of vulgar sympathy, protruding his face as near to Edith as possible, he was beginning, "I was much amazed and concerned to hear"——

When shrinking back, she said, "Excuse me, I fear I am rather late;" and she attempted to pass on.

"O, I don't think it can be late; but Mrs M'Dow's my regulator now—hoch, ho!"

Mrs M'Dow here displayed a highly ornamented watch and seals which hung at her side, and proclaimed the hour.

"Ay, we've come on very well considering; only considering though, Mrs M'Dow; for I don't travel just so briskly now as I used to do in my bachelor days—now that I'm taigled with a wife—hoch, ho, ho!"

"You must always have your joke, Mr M'Dow," said the lady, with a laugh, and a toss of the head.

Mr M'Dow, having now taken a safe position, went on: "I was desirous of taking the earliest opportunity of waiting upon my excellent pawtron. I considered it a proper mark of respect both to him and myself, considering the many years we have lived upon such pleasant, friendly terms; and I was likewise anxious to make Mrs M'Dow and you known to each other, Miss Malcolm, as I flatter myself it will be a mutual advantage. You must often find yourself lonesome enough at Glenroy; it's a great comfort for a lady of taste and refinement to have a *shuitable* companion of her own sex at hand."

Edith tried to articulate something, but in vain; she could only bow in silence.

Mr M'Dow proceeded: "I was vastly happy to find my excellent friend Glenroy so well and hearty. I had a long chat with him; and I was amazingly relieved to hear from him, that there was no truth in certain evil reports, that some ill-disposed wretches had been spreading on a very delicate subject. It's really most shameful," in a louder key; "I only wish I could find out who it was, I would not spare them!"

Edith shuddered, and attempted to pass, but in vain.

" I sat a long time with Glenroy, honest man; he seemed really happy to see me ! ' But,' says he, ' Mr M'Dow, I wish you had come half an hour ago, when I had Reginald and Edith here, just waiting for you; they've been kept waiting all this time for you to come and marry them.' And then, poor man, he gave me a good down-set for having stayed away. ' Why,' says I, ' I must plead guilty so far, that we extended our *tower* to a much greater length than we had thoughts of at first starting; but you must wait till you've seen my apology, Glenroy; I think you'll admit it's a fair one—hoch, ho, ho !' "

" You needn't put the blame upon me, Mr M'Dow," said his lady.

" Well, I confess I had no great objections to play the truant for a while—it's an amazing relief for a man to get away from the duties of a laborious calling, such as mine; and I found a good deal to see in Edinburgh, though the ladies would not allow it was equal to Glasgow."

" O! the streets and shops are very well,"

said Mrs M'Dow; "but I'm sure *their* Castle is not to be compared to *our* Green!"

"The worst of it is," said Miss Violet, with a sweet solemnity, "it is so much in the way in the Prince's Street Gardens."

"And as for their Joint-Stock Dairy we heard so much about," cried Mrs M'Dow, vehemently, "I'm sure it's not to be spoken of in comparison of ours."

"Well, I admit they must draw in their horns there," said Mr M'Dow, with one of his loudest laughs.

"You must always have your pun, minister," said Mrs M'Dow, with a giggle of delight.

"I enquired for Sir Reginald," said Mr M'Dow, again addressing Edith, who stood the image of despair; but "when I heard you and he were both missing, I could not help saying, 'I wish they may not have gone to steal a march upon us, Glenroy; it will be a pretty business if they've given us the slip, after all—hoch, hoch, ho!'"

"Pray, suffer me to pass," said Edith, sick at heart.

" O, certainly," said Mr M'Dow, but without moving a joint of either himself or his Amailye. " I was afraid we should have had a shower; but my wife is more weather-wise than me, it seems, for she and Miss Violet there, *would* put on their best bonnets to wait upon you. I told them that was really putting the best foot foremost, and that they ought to have kept them for the kirk on Sunday, but——Will you stand still, Amailye !"

The two bonnets were of salmon-coloured silk, with pink and green ribbons, and bunches of roses and sweet pea. The faces were large, flat, broad, red and white, assured-looking faces, such as are to be seen in scores on every market-day.

" It looks very like a change, minister,—I wish we mayn't have a shower," said Mrs M'-Dow, looking up in alarm, as a passing cloud for a moment obscured the sun.

" Ay, that's one word for me, and two for yourself, I suspect, my lady fair. Oh, *they* bonnets !—Stand still, Amailye !—I allege my wife thinks more of her new bonnet than she

does of me;—is that true, Colina?" with a look of triumphant love beaming in his face.

"O, Mr M'Dow, you're really too bad!" replied the lady, in a tone of reproachful tenderness.

"Bad as I am, you've taken me for better or worse—remember you that, my dear—hoch, hoch, ho!"

"I really don't think I could have ventured to take you at all, if I had seen you as daft as you are to-day, minister," said the lady, in a tone of mawkish affectation.

"If you think you've got a bad pennyworth, Colly, you'll not easily get me off your hands, I can tell you," cried the delighted Mr M'Dow, "for *I'm* not disposed to part with *my* bargain, I assure you; but I flatter myself you and I will be able to put up together—What say you, Miss Violet?"

A burst of laughter was Miss Violet's reply.

"Don't you believe her, Miss Malcolm, but take my advice, and follow our example as fast as you can. That was really a most scandalous report, I was alluding to!"

Edith's blood ran cold. "I entreat you will suffer me to pass, Mr M'Dow," she cried, in a tone, and with a look, that might have moved a stone, but which had no effect on the obtuse organs of Mr M'Dow.

"We'll get a shower, minister!" cried Mrs M'Dow, in a flurried manner, as she again cast an agitated look at the impending cloud.

"There it is! there's the bonnet again, Mrs M'Dow; but perhaps there's a *little* thought of the gudeman too, for I can tell you my wife's a famous nurse,—she's been doctoring my throat for me, for I had a little of a hoarseness lately, and I alleged she was very anxious that I should make a great show-off in the pulpit on Sunday, being my first matrimonial discourse; but we can't agree about the text, I——"

"O, Mr M'Dow, it's really getting very black in the west!" and Mrs M'Dow, getting desperate at the thoughts of her undone salmon-coloured silk bonnet, gave a jerk to the reins, and a chirrup to Amailye.

"Hoot toot, Mrs M'Dow, this will never do; what will my people say, if they see that

my wife has got the whip-hand of me already—hoch, hoch, ho!—But I think," addressing Edith, "the Synod itself would be satisfied that I could not be in better hands, if it once knew Mrs M'Dow." Here Amailye backed a little. "And if she should be the occasion of any backslidings, I think I may venture to say, they have only to look in her face, and they'll forgive them all." And with this flourish Mr M'Dow resumed his seat in the gig, and with a "Hap, hap," to Amailye, was once more in motion; but his voice was heard resounding through the woods, as he turned round his head, and called, to the utmost extent of his lungs, "I hope, Miss Malcolm, you will soon have some work for the minister!"

CHAPTER II.

It would be a vain attempt to depict the state of Glenroy's mind on the defection of his nephew. Not that he was at all aware of the nature or extent of the evil, for it would have been alike cruel and needless to have acquainted him with the truth. His mind was now incapable of receiving, or at least of retaining, aught but the ever-recurring images and ideas which seemed indigenous to the soil. As these followed not in regular succession, but came confusedly crowding together, pell mell, so did their kindred emotions of pride, sorrow, anger, impatience, and despondency, commingle in strange disorder, till his benighted mind, still groping for happiness, would at length lapse into fatuity or forgetfulness.

Dupe, not of to-morrow, but of to-day, he still lived in the momentary expectation of Reginald's return; and as his notions of time were as indistinct as of every thing else, he thus remained in comparatively happy ignorance, that days, weeks, and months, were like the brook flowing on, "for ever changing, unperceived the change." The present only was his calender, and deeply sunk is that mind where only the present finds place!

It was Edith's province to sit hour after hour striving to beguile the old man's childish impatience, or soothe his querulous disappointments, for Edith was now all in all to him. Independent of the feeling of natural affection which, even unknown to himself, still lingered in his heart, her image was indissolubly united in his mind with that of Reginald, the heir of his glory; while she was near him, he seemed to think Reginald could not be far off, or else he viewed her as a sort of hostage that ensured his speedy return.

It was a heavy burden that Edith had to bear, and a mere selfish worldly spirit could not have

sustained it as she did. But a sacred and interesting duty lay before her, and to that she devoted herself.

In most cases the offices of filial obedience and affection may be considered as privileges, rather than as duties; for happy may they account themselves whom God permits to reflect back upon the hoary head 'tis their delight to cherish, even a feeble portion of that love and gladness, which from the first dawn of life had showered blessings on their own daily path!

But Edith could not be supposed to feel the full influence of filial love, for there was nothing in the character of her father to fill the deep places of the heart. Mere natural affection is indeed a powerful sentiment in every breast—but how is it heightened and refined when the virtues of the parent claim alike the love and reverence of the child? They only can tell who have most deeply venerated where they most fondly loved! Still she loved him as the author of her being; and the infirmities of his mind and body seemed to endear him to her still more. As the proud, turbulent, overbearing Chief, he

had been the object of her fear—as the helpless, infirm, imbecile old man, broken down by grief, and with a dreamy sense of disappointment corroding his latter days, he possessed stronger claims on her tenderness and sympathy than ever he could have had in his high and palmy state.

So passed the winter, uncheered by aught save many a kind visit from Mrs Malcolm and her family. Glenroy's situation was a sufficient excuse for his daughter declining to receive company, even that of Mr M'Dow, although he made many attempts to intrude upon her privacy.

She learnt accidentally that Sir Reginald still remained at Dunshiera in no less strict seclusion; and, spite of herself, a vague and sickly hope would occasionally spring up in her heart, that a change might yet take place—that Reginald might yet awake from the delirium of passion, and return to the hallowed affection of his early days. But the hope had no root in itself, and often as it might spring up it soon withered away, for Edith's better judgment and loftier feeling refu-

sed to cherish the flattering chimera. And well for her peace that it was so. At the end of some months she received a letter from Reginald; it was written in the language of complaint and reproach. He dwelt on the wretchedness he had endured on her account—he declared that life was insufferable to him—a burden more than he could bear—that, bereft of her regard, and banished from Glenroy, nothing remained for him but a life of exile and sorrow—that he was therefore on the point of bidding a long adieu to Scotland—that he knew not, he cared not where he should go; but wherever he went, he should ever fervently pray a better and happier lot might be hers—and concluded by again protesting, that the only alleviation to his misery would be the assurance of her happiness.

Edith was deeply affected by this letter. The thoughts of Reginald an exile from his father's halls—from his own fair domain—from the land of his birth—and she the cause—even the innocent cause—added new anguish to her feelings. The illusion of love was not yet wholly dispelled from her heart, else she would have viewed the

matter in a different light. She would have seen that what appeared to her as sensibility, was, in reality, mere worldly selfishness, coloured over with the sickly hue of a better feeling.

Reginald despised the society of the country: He was wretched in solitude, and he had none of that benevolence of feeling, or even manly patriotism, which would have prompted him to seek a refuge from his own misery in alleviating the distresses, or improving the condition, of his people and property. When he, therefore, bewailed the necessity he was under of leaving his native country, he was sincere in believing what he said, for he was unconscious that, in reality, he was merely going to seek amusement elsewhere. A long and dreary interval succeeded his departure, during which Edith remained ignorant of the fate of the heart-broken exile, whom fancy often painted to her as sometimes sailing over the boundless ocean, seeking in another hemisphere to lose the keen remembrance of home, or wandering sad and solitary amid burning plains or pathless forests, reckless of life, or rather courting death. Alas! what bro-

ken reeds will not woman's love cling to, ere it can finally part with all its fond imaginations! Poor Edith had yet to learn another chapter of the deceitfulness, and the inconsistency of the human heart! In little more than three months from the date of his mournful farewell, the newspapers announced, in the usual pompous style, the magnificent ceremonial of the marriage of Sir Reginald Malcolm, Baronet, to Florinda, Baroness Waldegrave!

CHAPTER III.

And now Edith felt as though her destiny were sealed. Never more, did it seem, could her heart awaken to the love of aught that life could bestow. The idol her imagination had fashioned, had fallen; but even while it lay in shivers at her feet, still her fond, credulous heart had unconsciously hovered amid the broken fragments, in the vain hope that the image it had so adored might again rise, to receive the homage of a still enslaved soul. But now it had turned to very dust and ashes in her sight,—now the illusion was dispelled, and the selfish, hollow character of her lover appeared in its true colours. It was then a purer light dawned upon the darkness of her spirit. She now discerned that the image of the creature had held that place in her heart, and exercised that sway over her mind,

which belonged only to the Creator. The enchantment of life was then indeed dissolved, but what heir of immortality would wish to remain the dupe of this world's enchantments? Vain labour,

——" When souls of highest birth
Waste their impassion'd might on dreams of earth!"

"I never was happy," says Adams, "till I knew I could not be happy in this world."

To a mind so excited as hers had been, it was not the daily routine of common duties and petty cares that could fill that aching void, that desolation of heart, which, of all human miseries, is perhaps the most insupportable. For, to borrow the eloquent language of Chalmers, "The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the

world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendency? If the throne which is placed there, must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him, than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure his willing admittance, and taking unto himself his great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away, and all things are to become new."

The mind of Edith gradually became braced and invigorated by this new and wholesome principle, which imparted to her soul that vivifying warmth, without which virtue is but a name. She felt her trials, but she no longer felt them as the cruel mockings or wayward

caprices of chance or fortune; for now she believed that all human trials, painful as they may be in their endurance, transient and perishable in their existence, are nevertheless designed by Divine wisdom to exercise a purifying and a permanent influence on the immortal soul, by bringing it to seek its happiness in Him, who alone is the fountain of happiness, and with whom it is destined for ever to dwell.

> " Oh, sacred sorrow! by whom hearts are tried,
> Sent not to punish mortals, but to guide;
> If thou art mine, (and who shall proudly dare
> To tell his Maker he has had his share?)
> Still let me feel for what thy pangs are sent,
> And be my guide, and not my punishment."

With this prayer at her heart, and in the discharge of the daily duties of life, thus passed the even tenor of three long years, during which Glenroy lingered on in increasing dotage and infirmities, unconscious of evil, unsusceptible of pleasure—

> " All relish of realities expired,
> All feeling of futurity benumb'd."

And when at length the hour of his departure came, all that could be said of his death was, that

he had merely ceased to breathe;—but oh, the deep mystery of that simple transition! oh, the dread import of that silence, which mortal lips never can disclose!

Edith felt as all must feel, more or less, at the breaking of so dear and sacred a tie. Friendship and love, dear and holy affections as they may be, are the affections we ourselves have formed and chosen,—we can look back upon the time when as yet they were not, and their existence was not linked with ours; but from the first dawn of consciousness, it was a parent's love that beamed upon our hearts, and awakened all their best and holiest sympathies. Friends may meet as strangers,—the tenderest bands of love, even wedded love, may be broken,—but 'tis God himself who has formed that one indissoluble bond, which neither human power nor human frailty ever can dissolve. But now this occupation was gone,—and oh, the sadness of that morning light, which dawns upon us only to proclaim that it is indeed gone!

The grief of Benbowie and Mrs Macauley showed itself according to their different dispo-

sitions and modes of feeling. The former said nothing, uttered neither sigh nor lamentation; he only paced the floor with a heavier step, and looked round with a duller and more stupified gaze; the latter, even in the midst of her affliction, sincere as that was, still contrived to find some consolation in the preparation for, and in the anticipation of, the magnificent ceremonial which should close her beloved Chief's mortal career. The last solemn rites were now all that remained to be paid to the Chief of Glenroy; and after vainly waiting in hopes of the arrival of Sir Reginald, (who, with his lady, was abroad,) Captain Malcolm, as nearest relative of the deceased, was obliged to take the lead upon the occasion.

The burying of the dead is a simple operation; but custom has varied and amplified the accompanying rites to a great variety of forms and observances. The sacred and impressive service of the Church of England, in which the many sublime and affecting texts of Scripture that bear upon man's mortality, are so forcibly brought before the mind, soothes the feelings,

and elevates the soul of the mourner, when read over the remains of the righteous—one whose glorious immortality we feel assured is already begun; and though we still feel that, "in the midst of life, we are in death," we feel also the salutary and consoling truth expressed by the saddest but truest of poets,—

> "This truth how certain, when this life is o'er,
> Man dies to live, and lives to die no more."

But to the thinking mind there are misgivings, and the whole seems little more than a solemn mockery, when pronounced over the sad relics of worldly pride, unruly passion, and scornful unbelief. The extreme unction of the Catholics professes to bear along with it a saving efficacy; but the Church of England service, if read over the remains of the wicked and the impenitent, can serve no purpose but to harrow the feelings of the living, and rake up the ashes of the dead. In the plain Presbyterian form, as far as that goes, there is the power of adapting it to most cases and circumstances; and although it never attains to the sublime and finished excellence of the Episcopal service, still, in the

hands of a good and conscientious man, a solemn and a useful lesson may be learned from its simple and impressive truths.

But the service on the present occasion, as performed by Mr M'Dow, more resembled a clumsy heathen apotheosis, than a simple Christian rite; though, to do him justice, he had laboured with all his might to show forth the merits of his respected patron, whose loss he, from various motives, sincerely and deeply regretted. A vast concourse assembled to pay the last honours to the mighty departed; and the Chief of Glenroy was consigned to the narrow house with all but royal pomp.

And now Edith stood alone in the world, and a dreary prospect lay before her—deprived of that resting-place for the affections, which the tender relation of a parent more or less affords, she by the same stroke found herself suddenly reduced from a state of wealth and consequence, the state in which she had been born and reared, to one of actual poverty and dependence. Glenroy's estate was strictly entailed on the male heirs, and his personal property was found

not equal to the amount of his debts. His marriage had been made without the formality of settlements; and his natural indolence of mind in all that related to matters of business, together with his habits of reckless profusion and ostentation, had ever prevented him from taking any steps towards securing a provision for his daughter. The worth or the affection of a parent is certainly not to be estimated by the amount of the wealth he may bequeath to his children, since, in the dear remembrance of a good life, a virtuous example and an unsullied name, a parent may leave a more precious inheritance to his posterity, than all the boast of wealth or pride of ancestry—while another may gather up accumulated riches, which turn to dust and ashes even in his own sordid grasp, or may transmit them to future generations with a blighted name, a despised memory, and a character stamped with its own base ignoble features. But Glenroy did not belong to either of these classes; he had led a life of mere worldly pride, vanity, ostentation, and prodigality; he had sown the wind, leaving it to those who should come after him to "reap

the whirlwind;" he had had his good things in his own life—leaving it to his child to eat the bitter fruits of poverty, humiliation, and dependence.

In due time, it was necessary that Edith should be apprised of her situation; and although that was done with all possible delicacy and precaution by her kind friends the Malcolms, still there was no way in which the truth could be told so as to blunt its severity. The fact itself could not be disguised, however much friendship and tenderness might strive to soften it. She, the daughter of proud Glenroy, reared amidst the rude magnificence of feudal state, and accustomed personally to habits of noble expenditure and costly refinement, to be all at once sunk to a condition of the most sordid penury and abject dependence!

It is not those who have been born and bred in affluence, who can all at once comprehend the nature of absolute poverty—those who have been accustomed to will their every gratification can ill conceive the privations of want—the shifts and expedients of fallen fortune—the difficulty

which the mind has to contract its desires, and the habits of self-indulgence and luxury which have to be overcome or annihilated; in short, nothing differs more than abstract and actual poverty.

Edith was, as may be supposed, profoundly ignorant of all those things in detail; but the simple fact that she was destitute, was sufficiently strange and appalling. In vain did Mrs Malcolm, as she folded her to her heart, assure her, she looked upon her as her own daughter; and besought her, in all the fervour of the fondest, warmest affection, to look upon Inch Orran as her future home. Edith assented to its affording her a temporary asylum; but she could not bear to think of it as her permanent residence. The state of Glenroy's affairs had been communicated to Sir Reginald by letter. A reply was received, requesting that Edith would continue to consider Glenroy as her own, and make him her banker, until proper arrangements could be made to secure her future comfort and independence. But to remain at Glenroy, or receive pecuniary aid from Regi-

nald, were both out of the question; and she therefore prepared to bid a long, a last adieu to the home of her youth—to her father's house. Vain would be the attempt to depict the feelings with which that was done—

> "Ye who have known what 'tis to dote upon
> A few dear objects, will in sadness feel
> Such partings break the heart!"—

CHAPTER IV.

The invitation to Inch Orran had been no less kindly and cordially extended to Mrs Macauley, who, indeed, like Dominie Sampson, had declared her resolution of sticking by her patron's daughter to the last gasp. Mrs Macauley felt this as she felt every affliction, in her own peculiar way. Prone as she was to indulge the visionary belief that she beheld coming events casting "their shadows before," she was no less given to reverse the figure; and no sooner did an evil befall, than she was busy seeking for the blessing which she was certain was following close in its train. "O, what curious creatures we are!" exclaimed she to Benbowie, as the tears flowed down her cheeks; "to think of Glenroy's daughter being brought to such straits!—Oh, if we could but see to the back of this great cloud that's upon her—not a bit but we would

be surprised at the grand things that are provided for her, if not in this world, surely in that which is to come; but we are such poor blind ignorant creatures, that we can only do as good Job did, put our hands upon our mouths, and hold our tongues. Oh, surely, if it had not been for some great purpose, things would never have been permitted to take this turn. Such a good man as Glenroy, and so proud of his own daughter, would never have got leave to forget to do what was right, if it had not been appointed for our good; and, after all, we have great reason to be thankful. Oh! I read such excellent words in a good book of Holy Living, the t'other day, that, 'deed, I learnt them by heart, and I've often said them over to myself since; but I never thought they were to be made suitable for Glenroy's dochter. Now hearken to me, Benbowie, and see if you can understand me—'Is that beast better that hath two or three mountains to graze on, than a little bee that feeds on dew or manna, and lives upon what falls every morning from the storehouses of heaven, clouds, and Providence?' But one thing I'm sure of, Benbowie, that if I was you, like the great beast,

with his mountains to graze on, and saw Glenroy's dochter, like the little bee that has to be fed from the storehouses of Providence, not a bit but I would think myself highly favoured, if I was permitted to make her a present of maybe ten thousand pounds, or so—that I would!"

Benbowie's eyes grew rounder and rounder. "Ten thousand pound is a great deal of money, Mrs Macauley—a very great deal of money. On my conscience, it's a great deal of money.—I wish you good-morning, Mrs Macauley!" And Benbowie ordered his chaise, and departed.

Various were the communings which Mrs Macauley held, as her mind revolved high matters of expediency and propriety as to where her beloved charge should, or could reside, with the greatest comfort to herself, and the dignity due to Glenroy's daughter. But, with a true delicacy of mind, which would have shamed many in a far superior station, Mrs Macauley abstained from all appearance of commiseration, nor even alluded in the slightest degree, in presence of Edith herself, to her change of fortune. A little tinge of additional respect, was all the difference perceptible in her manner.

The only person on whom Edith possessed any near claim of relationship, was a half sister of her mother's, but in all other respects an utter stranger to her, or known only by the contemptuous manner in which she had heard her occasionally mentioned by Glenroy as a cit—a cockney, and so on. At the same time, as she was rich and childless, he did not disdain to conciliate her favourable opinion, by occasionally ordering a box of game, or some such demonstration of regard and affinity, to be sent, as might, he thought, entitle him or his family to a good legacy in return. But as yet, Mrs Ribley's testimonies of affection had consisted in sending, at three several times, to Edith, a small Tunbridge ware work-box; a copy of "Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women;" and lastly, "Letters to a Young Lady, on a variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects, calculated to improve the Heart, to form the Manners, and enlighten the Understanding. By the Rev. John Bennet" —inscribed, from her affectionate aunt, Catherine Ribley.

It was by the maternal side that Glenroy's lady and Mrs Ribley had been related. The fa-

ther of the former, a poor Highlander, had left a handsome widow and an only child, to push their fortune as they best could. The child had been taken by her father's relations, and became afterwards the wife of Glenroy. The widow went as companion to an old lady in London, where she contrived to captivate a citizen of credit, if not of renown. An only daughter was the offspring of this union: heiress of her father's wealth, at his death she bestowed it with her hand upon Mr Peter Ribley, a sleeping partner in the old-established house of Rudge, Ribley, and Company. As there was no family to inherit the concentrated wealth of this pair, Glenroy had made it out as a clear case, in his own mind, that a portion of it would certainly descend to his children; and, indeed, he seemed to think it would be a great honour for the old cockney's money to be permitted to flow into so noble a channel.

Edith had received a letter of condolence from Mrs Ribley on her father's death; it was such a letter as any body, or every body, might write, a neat, clear, plain, commonplace letter, containing the ordinary expressions of regret usual on

those occasions, where little or nothing of the kind is, or can be felt; concluding with an invitation to spend a year with Mr Ribley and her, when they should be happy to assist her in arranging her plans for her future mode of life. Edith had answered this letter, declining the invitation for the present, but with a half promise of accepting it at some future time, when her health and spirits might be more equal to the exertion. But months elapsed, and she still remained the cherished inmate of Inch Orran, secluded from all but the society of those dear friends, the salutary intercourse of their pious pastor, and visits of kindness to the neighbouring poor. Many who had experienced her father's hospitalities, had sought to repay them to his daughter; and she had received many kind and pressing invitations from some of those whom she had ever welcomed in the days of her prosperity. Some more sordid and selfish spirits, indeed, ceased to notice her whom they had formerly flattered and caressed, when presiding over an almost princely establishment; others of vulgar minds and inferior station, seemed to think

the mere lack of wealth had reduced the daughter of Glenroy to a level with themselves. Amongst the number was Mr M'Dow, who, fired with the noble ambition of patronising the daughter of the lordly Chief to whom he owed his preferment, wrote to her as follows:

"My dear Madam,

"As I have not had the good fortune to find you at home on my late visits to Inch Orran, and it is rather inconvenient for me to ride so far for a morning call, I take what I conceive the preferable mode of communicating with you on a matter which Mrs M'Dow and myself have much at heart. By the lamented death of my late excellent friend, your father, I am truly concerned to learn your circumstances are not altogether such as might have been reasonably expected from the high station which your father occupied, and which, consequently, you had always been accustomed to enjoy. I beg to assure you this change in your circumstances will not in any shape affect the high opinion I have all along entertained of you. No doubt the bereavement,

sore as it was, of so valuable a life as that of your good father's, has been pretty considerably augmented by the distressing turn which affairs have taken, which have rendered this, I may say, a variegated calamity of no common complexion; and since misfortunes will befall the best of us, it behoves us to make up our minds to them; for as Solomon says, 'There is a time for all things.' I therefore hope that your own excellent sense, and the company of some cheerful and *rationally* religious friends, may go far to bring about a great improvement in your health and spirits; and I will be extremely gratified if it should be through my instrumentality that it is so. For that purpose Mrs M'Dow and myself are of opinion, that a change might prove highly beneficial to you, and it will give us both great pleasure to have your company at the manse for a few weeks. We are hopeful you will favour us by naming an early day, as we can promise you more amusement at present, than it may be in our power to procure for you hereafter. Mrs M'Dow's sister, Miss Violet Muckle, is upon a visit to us just now, as likewise my nephew, Mr Andrew M'Fie, (who

is breeding a surgeon with his father;) my friend, Mr Dugald M'Dow, is expected to join us in a few days; so you will find us, I flatter myself, a pretty agreeable party. And as my wife and myself are of opinion, there is nothing so enlivening as the stir of a young family, we are hopeful you will experience much refreshment from the mirth and vivacity of our young folks, who are nowise shy—but, on the contrary, amazingly taken with strangers, so we can promise you many a good game of romps with them, poor lambies! Our eldest daughter, who has nearly attained her third year, is a fine sonsie lass, with a will of her own already. My second girl is an extremely forward, smart child, (more of a Muckle than a M'Dow,) fast treading on her sister's heels, and can already keep her own with her. My son (who is quite a young giant) has just begun to be weaned, (in fact, that has been the hinderance to his mother's waiting upon you, which she would otherwise have done,) and has, I am happy to say, stood his trials in that way hitherto as well as we could possibly expect; indeed his mother had

begun him with his porridge three months ago, and it's amazing to see how he sups them! We are hopeful you will find him a great resource once the first speaning brash is fairly over with him, poor man!—Mrs M'Dow unites with me in kind regards. And I am, dear madam, faithfully yours,

"Duncan M'Dow.

"P.S.—In case you should not be able to secure the accommodation of the Inch Orran carriage, I will have much pleasure in taking a ride over for you any day in my gig, as my wife and myself are anxious you should not incur any expense by your visit to us."

Even Mrs Macauley reddened as she read this letter.—"Did ever ony body hear the like of that?" cried she; "to think of Glenroy's daughter going dadden about the country in a gig with Mr M'Dow!—'Deed he's no blate!—I hope I'm not proud; for pride was not made for man, far less for woman, helpless creatures that we are! But 'deed I never would have dreamt of

such a thing as that!—her that's been used all her days to travel like any princess, to think of her going about in that *waff* way—as sure as death, I'm very ill pleased at Mr M'Dow for taking such a liberty with Glenroy's daughter—now that she's not so rich as she should be! And to think that the skirlin' of his weans could be any comfort to her in her distress!"

There is no situation so humble in which demonstrations of regard and respect, or even affection, may not be rendered acceptable and even gratifying to those in the most exalted station; and when indicative of a right feeling, they cannot fail to be accepted in the same spirit, and duly appreciated by all whose esteem is worth conciliating. Probably, Mr M'Dow meant to act kindly—but his was the kindness of a coarse, vulgar, sordid mind, incapable of acting with delicacy under any circumstances; and of course his attentions could only wound and revolt the feelings of those whom he intended to benefit. It is almost unnecessary to add that his invitation was declined, to his great surprise and mortification.

The next letter which Edith received was from her stepmother.

"My dear Edith,

"I have been extremely shocked by the intelligence that has just reached me, of your poor dear father's death. I assure you I was not in the least prepared for it—so you may easily imagine how sadly I was overcome. I am now, thank Heaven, more composed, and was able to take an airing, which has done me good. But Dr Belloni is of opinion it will be some time before my nerves are restored to their natural tone. My spirits are, you may believe, much indisposed by this shocking event, and I am sure you will feel it also. It was particularly severe upon me at this time, as I had scarcely recovered from the shock of losing my darling Amoretta. Her illness was very lingering—but this is too sad a subject to pursue. It is, however, a great comfort to me now, that I did go to Scotland to see your poor father, as I am sure it gratified him, though it certainly was too much for me, and I must always think that the severity of the climate was the cause of Amoretta's decline.

—But that was a sad expedition altogether !—You may remember also, how near I was to losing dearest Florinda in crossing your frightful lake, and had it not been for Sir Reginald, I was assured she certainly would have been drowned. The consequence was, you know, she thought herself obliged, poor love, to marry him in return !—I assure you I did all I could to prevent her from throwing herself away ; but she was so *entichée* with him, that it was *peine perdue*. Between ourselves, I believe she now wishes she had taken my advice, for, to tell the truth, (but this all *entre nous*,) I think she is far from being so happy as she ought to be, although she is prodigiously admired wherever she goes. She was at a ball at the ambassador's lately, dressed *a la Reine Henriette*, and covered with diamonds ; never any thing was seen so perfect. It made me almost cry, I do assure you, when I thought so charming a creature should have sacrificed herself from a mistaken sense of gratitude to a man so perfectly unworthy of her in every respect, as Prince Camarascha and le Duc de Chappinelle both said to me. It is very well known that he games,

keeps race-horses, and does every thing that is foolish and expensive. As to Florinda, her house, dress, and equipage, are quite unrivalled, and her taste is perfect. She gives quite the tone in every thing. I have got a very pretty house of my own, as there was no accommodation for me and my suite in Lady Waldegrave's palazza. But I make a point of going wherever she goes —as with a husband whom it is impossible she can love—and so excessively admired as she is, I think it absolutely necessary that she should still be under my protection. At the same time, I find it ruinous to my slender income to keep up with her. I am happy to say, I am in excellent health at present, and indeed it is likely to continue, as Dr Belloni is a most skilful man, and understands my constitution perfectly. It had been sadly injured by the mistaken system of Dr Price, who was a good creature, but certainly the most stupid, ignorant, and selfish man in the world. Belloni says it is quite a miracle that I am alive after such treatment. How very shocking to think of such a thing! I think it would do you good to take a little trip to the Continent,

my dear Edith—it would amuse you. I should be very happy to introduce you into society—Do think of it. *Apropos*, it is possible, we may return to England by and by. Sir Reginald has taken it into his head that the climate does not agree with their little boy, which Dr Belloni assures me is nonsense.

"This is a very long letter; but I thought it would amuse you to hear all about those dear friends, who, I assure you, have not forgot you. Florinda sends her love and sincere condolence, and has long intended writing to you, but will certainly carry it into effect soon. Meantime she says, she will be delighted to receive a letter from you.

"Believe me, dear Edith, ever affectionately yours,

"E. MALCOLM.

"Of course you have heard of Madame Latour's shameful behaviour, in having married a man twenty years younger than herself, after having got Florinda to settle L.500 a-year upon her for life!"

CHAPTER V.

Mrs Malcolm perceived with deep regret, that it was not at Inch Orran Edith was likely to regain her cheerfulness and animation. The occupation of the heart and affections was gone. There was no lover now to watch her coming steps—no father to weary for the voice of his child. And yet the scenes of her past happiness lay spread out before her eyes as fair and smiling as in those bright and prosperous days. There, wherever she turned, stood the grey towers of Glenroy; but now silent and deserted, the appearance of desolation and neglect gradually stealing over its once cherished domain. The only sound that now echoed from its shores, that of the axe ringing amongst its green woods, and reverberating amid its mountain solitudes, as its leafy honours were brought low.

In her long and dreary attendance on her father's death-bed, her spirits had been sustained by the influence of those divine truths which still breathed peace into her heart. But the natural elasticity of her mind had been depressed, and a character of stillness and seclusion was gradually stealing over it, which it would require a strong effort to counteract. The closest ties of relationship had one by one been severed from her heart, and she now felt as if standing alone in the world. It is perhaps only the two extremes of human nature—the selfish or the spiritual-minded—to whom the solitude of even worldly affections is not the saddest of all desolations. Her tender friends were willing to make every sacrifice in their power for the recovery of one so dear to them; but it was difficult for them to arrange any plan which was likely to accomplish this purpose. It was in the midst of this perplexity that a second letter arrived from Mrs Ribley, renewing her invitation to Edith. Thus a new vista was opened in the prospect; and even if it were not very alluring, it possessed at

least the recommendation of novelty. The letter was as follows:—

"My dear Niece,

"I had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 24th February, and it afforded Mr Ribley and me much satisfaction to see that you were resigned to the will of Providence, which it is at all times our duty to be. The books which I would particularly recommend to your serious consideration at this time, are those valuable works, which, on former occasions, I had the pleasure of sending you, and from which, I trust, you have already derived much improvement; but they cannot be read *too* often! I allude to 'Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women,' and 'Bennet's Letters to a Young Lady on a variety of useful and interesting subjects, calculated (beyond any book I am acquainted with) to improve the heart, to form the manners, and enlighten the understanding.' You have certainly much cause for thankfulness, in being so fortunate as to possess such worthy and respectable friends as Mr and Mrs Malcolm of Inch

Orran. Mr Ribley and I trust that the state of your health and spirits is now such as will enable you to make out your promised visit to us. And we hope you may find your stay with us both pleasant and advantageous. As the communication between England and Scotland is now very frequent, you will no doubt be able to hear of a modest and respectable opportunity, and you have only to favour me with a line when the time is fixed for setting out, and also one when you can calculate upon the precise time of your arriving here.

"Mr Ribley unites with me in offering best respects to Mr and Mrs Malcolm; and acknowledgments for the kind attention they have paid you; and with good wishes, I remain, my dear niece, your affectionate aunt,

"KATH. RIBLEY."

It was evident from this letter that Mrs Ribley was at least fifty years behind the rest of the world in her ideas, and there certainly was nothing very alluring in the manner in which this invitation was couched. Yet it is well known

there are persons of warm and generous feelings, who are devoid of the power of expressing them, and who, conscious of their own inability, frequently fly to the very opposite extreme of coldness and reserve,—even as there are others whose hollow hearts are for ever reverberating unmeaning civilities and empty professions, to which their whole life gives the lie. It was evident Mrs Ribley did not belong to the latter and more odious class, and it was just possible she might be of the former. Mrs Malcolm, whose judgments were always lenient and charitable, strove to encourage this idea. She saw it was of the utmost importance to Edith's future well-being that her mind should be roused to exertion, even though that exertion should be of a painful nature,—that her thoughts should be forced into another channel, even although that channel might abound in rough and stony places. In the circumstances in which Edith was placed, she had but a choice of evils—either to remain as a member of a family on whom her claims of relationship were slight, or to avail herself of the protection of those whom Provi-

dence had appointed as her natural guardians. The struggle of her mind was great; but a sense of duty prevailed, and she accepted the invitation, though with repugnance. Neither on the letter, nor on the deliberations that ensued, did Mrs Macauley offer a single comment, contrary to her usual practice, which was that of being always ready to think aloud on every subject that was presented to her.

Mrs Macauley had all that instinctive feeling which it is said belongs to her sex, even when most deficient in habits of reflection; and her instinct made her thus commune with herself:

"'Deed, and I'm not fond of that letter at all —it's but a hard, dry morsel; 'but they that would eat the kernel, must crack the nut.' It has been so ordained that Glenroy's daughter cannot pick and choose for herself, as she might once have done; and so I would not be the one to put her from taking what He that's wiser than us all has been pleased to set before her. And though it's true we must leave father-land and mother-land, yet did not faithful Abraham

do the very same thing before us, good luck to him and us both!" * * * *

"Dear Macky, you do not tell me what you think of this proposal of my aunt's," said Edith to her, as, with a sigh, she took up her pen to answer Mrs Ribley's letter, in the affirmative.

"O 'deed, my dear, my thoughts are not just what they used to be; they've had a great deal to vex them, you know,—not but what it's all for our good; no doubt we'll be all the wiser and better for our affliction, if not in this world. at any rate in another."

"You say true, dear Macky; but——" and a tear dropt from Edith's eyes on the paper—"but it grieves me to think I must part from you, if I go to England."

"Part from me, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs Macauley, in astonishment, "what could put that in your head? Did not I tell you that nothing but death, or maybe marriage, (if so be your husband did not like me,) should ever part us in this world?"

"Then I must not think of going amongst these near relations," said Edith, laying down her pen, "for I will not forsake you, my dear old friend; and I fear I may not hope they—Ah. dear Macky, I fear, from this letter of my aunt's"——

"My darling, oh do not vex yourself at all about that, for I have my own little plans ready cut and dry, and I need not be a burden upon any body that's not a drop's blood to me; I have my own small means, such as they are, thanks to that good man your papa!—and I have a nephew of Mr Macauley's, that's a working jeweller and watchmaker, and a wise, well-doing, respectable creature, and married to a decent woman, and they live in the city of London; I have their direction in my drawer; they've invited me, before now, to pay them a visit,—and so, my dear, when you go to your friends, I'll go to mine; and I'll never have my eye off you, for, 'deed, we cannot always be quite sure that our relations will be what they should be; but what signifies that in comparison when I am at your hand, (not that I would be so foolish

and conceited as to think the help was in me,) to see that nobody dares so much as meddle with your little finger without my knowing it;—not a bit but that's a comfort I would not part with to be made queen of all England!"

It was a comfort to Edith also to find she was not to be wholly severed from all she had ever known and loved; and she fondly embraced the dear and faithful friend, who, at the age of threescore years and ten, was ready to follow her fallen fortunes, with all the alacrity of youth. Nor was aught wanting on the part of Mr and Mrs Malcolm to testify the tenderness and sincerity of their affection. Inch Orran was to conduct his beloved charge himself to London, and consign her from his own hands into those of her natural guardians. Edith would have resisted this proof of attachment, but all her objections were overruled by her generous and disinterested friends; and Mrs Macaulay was comforted by thinking, that though Glenroy's daughter was to travel in "a modest, respectable manner," it would also be in a genteel, ladylike style.

The hour of departure came, and with it poor Edith's *last* trial—for fairer and dearer than ever seemed each long cherished object, when about to tear herself from them. In the silence of anguish she parted from all; but even in sorrow, though cast down, she felt she was not forsaken: and Faith and Hope still gilded the path, joyless as it was, which duty led her to tread.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the month of May when the travellers entered England—merry England—with all its broad meadows and blooming orchards, each set in its own verdant frame—its lordly towers, with their fair demesnes and far-spreading woods—its baronial halls and ancient manors, with all their pride and privileges—its antique churches, with their sweetly chiming bells—its smiling villages—its peaceful hamlets—and, more than all, its lowly cottages, their rustic casements. brightly glancing through a "shower of shadowing roses," and their garden plats, as if proud to display their gaudy neatness to each passer by. All who have perceptions must be aware there is a difference between England and Scotland, and that all the powers of steam and locomotion have not yet brought them to assimilate. Wealth

—the progressive wealth of bygone ages, with all its power and its experience, its confidence and its consistency, is there every where apparent; while, in Scotland, the marks of iron-handed necessity are still visible, even through the beauteous covering which genius and romance have cast over her. And what though it be so? and why should Scotland blush to acknowledge a somewhat harder lot than that of its richer, fairer sister? What though its soil be more sterile, its skies more stormy? Are not these defects more than atoned for, in the ever-varying beauties of its winding shores, its rocky streams, its lofty mountains, its romantic glens? And the eye accustomed to these will feel, even amid England's fairest scenes,—

> "England, thy beauties are tame and domestic,
> To one who has roam'd on the mountains afar."

And Scotland, with all its wants, will ever be to its own children the "land of our love, our fathers' home!"

On approaching the metropolis, the indications of wealth become still more striking.

To villas, embowered in woods and commons, with their patrician villages, succeed the suburban cities, which radiate from the mighty centre in all directions, with their streets, and squares, and crescents, and terraces,—

"A mighty maze, but not without a plan."

It were vain to attempt depicting the sensations which fill the mind on first entering London. There is so much to astonish, to delight, and to disappoint, to bewilder and to excite, on a first survey, that all becomes "confusion worse confounded," in the attempt to investigate the nature of our feelings. It was a lovely evening when the little party entered the city, and began to thread the intricacies of its narrow streets, swarming as they ever are with coaches, omnibuses, drays, waggons, vans, carrs, cabriolets, and vehicles of unknown names, and of every and no description. While, on either hand, the busy multitude flows ceaselessly along, meeting and mingling in one vast tide of human life. It is not always that novelty charms by its own power; and to Edith and Mrs Macauley the

scene was more strange than pleasing. The simple dwellers in a remote and thinly peopled country, where each individual, with all his little history of joys and sorrows, was known and sympathised with, they looked almost with affright on the busy crowd that everywhere surrounded them, and beheld with amazement the bustle, the activity, the energy, that everywhere pervaded this living mass; while, in the midst of seeming anarchy, each and all moved in his own sphere, one of myriads, yet as much apart from all fellowship or cognizance of those around him, as though he stood alone in the universe.

"O, will not that stupid man stop and ask what is the meaning of this great mob?" cried Mrs Macauley, as they entered on a still more dense and stirring scene. "Surely something extraordinary has happened; maybe there's a house on fire, or they're trying to catch a thief, or somebody has been killed, or—but—but oh, not a bit! if it is not the King himself!" as she caught a glimpse of one of the sheriffs' gaudy equipages. "O, if we could but get a sight of his own royal person!"

Captain Malcolm smiled at her simplicity, and strove to tranquillize and enlighten her mind a little, as to the actual state of things. But poor Mrs Macauley was too busy with her eyes to receive any information by her ears. For the present, therefore, " Knowledge was at one entrance quite shut out," and she went on soliloquizing.

" O, if that silly man would but stop till all this hubbleshow's past! Where can the people all come from, and where can they be going to? And to see what heartless, unfeeling creatures they are to one another! Not one of them shakes hands or stops, or so much as looks at his neighbour, as if he had ever seen him before, or as if he were any thing more to him than the stones of the streets! And to see how we are jammed in and compassed on every side! And the shops, they are more than can be numbered, and yet I have not seen Johnnie Macauley's name amongst them all! O, this is a fearful place, and now that we're in, I wish we may ever be able to find our way out."

And so Mrs Macauley went on, as the car-

riage slowly proceeded through the crowded mazes of the city, till at length it turned into a quiet, but still narrower street, which conducted to their destination. This was a small dingy court, surrounded on three sides with dark, red brick houses, the windows faced with white, and most of them decorated with pots of London-pride and wall-flower. In the middle of the court was a bunch (for it had not the dignity of a clump) of poplars, enclosed in an elaborate iron-railing. The fourth side displayed the back front of a mean-looking church, its yellow gravelled path bordered with thrift or sea-pink. All looked gloomy and airless, yet all bore an appearance of the most scrupulous neatness and cleanliness, even in the midst of London smoke. The court itself was in the shade of evening; but the upper windows were glittering in the rays of the setting sun, and Edith sighed as she thought how its glories were now resting on her own Highland hills!

"And is this the place for Glenroy's dochter?" exclaimed Mrs Macauley, in blank amazement. "'Deed, then, it's but a poor hole we've brought

her to;" and poor Molly's Highland pride swelled up to her very eyes.

"You must not judge by appearances here," said Captain Malcolm, with a smile. "There is perhaps more wealth concentrated in this little spot than would buy Glenroy and Inch Orran ten times over."

"Well, well, but they cannot buy our good Hieland blood, that's one mercy," cried Mrs Macauley—"But they may be very daacent people for all that; and at any rate, pride was not made for man. So it is our duty to be satisfied, whatever befalls us!"

The carriage stopt at Mr Ribley's door, which was opened by a respectable-looking livery servant, who ushered the strangers into an old-fashioned hall, where Mr Ribley was stationed to receive his guests. He was a little, round, good-humoured-looking man, with small features, florid complexion, light blue eyes, a flaxen wig, and a shambling gait.

"How d'ye do—how d'ye do?—happy to see you—expected you sooner—long past dinner hour, but you shall have something," cried he,

in a quick, shrill key; "so come along—follow me—Here, Kitty, my dear," leading the way to a parlour, "here are Mr, and Mrs, and Miss your niece, and all of them—Can give them a rump-steak—can't you, Kit y, my dear?"

Mrs Ribley, to whom this was addressed, was seated in a small, dull, tidy, old-fashioned parlour, before a little work-table, with a large ominous-looking bag attached to it. She was, in outward appearance, a complete contrast to her husband. She was a tall, and rather stately-looking person, well made, well clothed, and very upright. She had a grey complexion, large Roman nose, eyes such as Wordsworth describes,—

> "Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare,
> Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant and strange,
> Proclaiming boldly that they never drew
> A look or motion of intelligence."

Altogether she was of a grave and imposing aspect. She welcomed the party with formal politeness, and saluted Edith with what was meant for affectionate kindness, but lacked its genial warmth; which, however, Edith's own

emotion, Mr Ribley's flurried movements, and the usual bustle of arrival, rendered less observable.

"Kitty, my dear, sure Miss your niece, and her friends, must be hungry—can't you let them have a rump-steak—London rump-steak? —a great delicacy to Scotch people!"

"Certainly, Mr Ribley, if you think proper, and our friends do not object."

But here, with one voice, the offer was declined by the whole party.

"Not have a nice rump-steak!" exclaimed Mr Ribley, in astonishment; "why, it's quite a restorative after a journey. Perhaps you prefer tea and toast?—tea and toast very good," repeated he, as he ambled up and down the room. "Kitty, my dear, an't it our tea-time?"

"It will be in a quarter of an hour, Mr Ribley," replied Mrs Ribley, looking at her watch; "and in the meantime——"

"Ah, in the meantime," interrupted Mr Ribley, "shan't we order a sandwich—nice ham sandwich?—Westphalia ham in the house at this moment—beautiful ham!—bought it my-

self!—the flesh as red as a rose, fat as white as a lily!—quite a nosegay!—An't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"A very fine ham indeed, Mr Ribley," responded Mrs Ribley. But here another protest was entered against the sandwiches; and as the carriage was still waiting to convey Captain Malcolm and Mrs Macauley to their respective destinations, they declined waiting even for the tea and toast, but took leave, promising to return to dinner the following day. Poor Mrs Macauley could not trust herself to speak to Edith, but, struggling to repress her feelings, after a long embrace the affectionate creature tore herself away, and Edith was left to the combined wretchedness of loneliness and constraint.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr and Mrs Ribley were, in their own way, a very respectable, comfortable pair; but it was comfort and respectability from which minds of a higher cast would have turned away. And indeed there was little to love or admire in either. Mr Ribley was what he at first sight appeared to be, a mere gossiping, good-natured body, with a silly admiration of, and respect for, his own wife, and a constant habit of referring to her opinion on every and on no occasion. Mrs Ribley's character was best described by negatives. She was neither a weak nor an unamiable woman; she belonged not to the class of either lamenting women, nor advising women, nor bustling women, nor imprudent women. Neither was she an ordinary or an extraordinary woman; but she was a phlegmatic, conscientious

woman, without taste, feeling, or fancy, who did what she conceived her duty in all cases, and was quite satisfied that she had done so. No generous impulse ever led her beyond the strict line of duty; no compunctious visitings ever caused her to mourn that she had fallen short of it. She was a woman of dull proprieties, and minute observances. She was at least forty years behind the rest of the world in her ideas; and a dunce of other times is perhaps still worse than a dunce of our own. They were religious, as far as mere outward observances went,—which, indeed, with them, as with many others, were mistaken for religion itself; they were regular attenders of church, repeated the responses most audibly, were punctual observers of all feasts, fasts, and festivals, because they had been so trained, and, living under the Christian dispensation, their morals necessarily partook in some degree of its benign influence; but to the sublimity and the beauty of its divine nature they were utter strangers, for they were mere religious animals on Sundays and church-days. In short, they were dull plodders through life, with-

out any other purpose than that of fulfilling small duties, and contributing to their own selfish comforts.

Such was the pair with whom Edith was henceforth to be associated, and already her heart sickened at the dreary anticipations which imagination placed before her. For the first time the misery of dependence was felt by her in all its bitterness, and all the bright and lovely visions of her early days rose before her, as if to mock the joyless realities of her present condition. Oh, could her father have foreseen that such was to be the destiny of the last of his mighty line!—that she, the child of wealth and state, and high-born pride, was to sink into the humble dependent of the sordid and obscure relation, whom, in the days of prosperity, he scarcely deigned to acknowledge! Such were Edith's last mournful reflections ere she sunk to sleep, the tears still wet on her eyelids.

"True as the dial to the sun,"

the following morning brought the faithful Mrs Macauley to the bedside of her beloved charge;

and when Edith opened her eyes, the first object that presented itself was the round, happy face of her old friend beaming upon her with looks of love and gladness, as she sat by the bed, with a nosegay in her hand.

"Good morning to you, my darling," cried she, in her usual blithe tone. "You don't know how sweet you look in your sleep!—as sweet as this bunch of new-blown roses, that I bought as I came along, and only smell how sweet they are! I'm sure you must have had good and pleasant dreams—have not you, my dear?"

"At least my dreams were less sad than my thoughts," said Edith, with a sigh, "for they were of past times!"

"Well, my dear, that's a good sign to dream of the past, and something to be thankful for—and this is a very neat, comfortable room—and Mr Ribley looks a fine, hospitable, good-natured body; and 'deed I think Mrs Ribley seems a very decent, perjink woman—and every thing is really very creditable-like about them—And so you must do your best to be as well pleased as you can."

"I hope, dear Macky, you have reason to be pleased with your relations, and that you find yourself comfortable?" said Edith.

"And 'deed I have great reason to be thankful. Johnnie and his wife made me very welcome, and are very kind to me, and I have a very neat, little, light bed-closet to myself, which holds a bed very well—and I'll soon get used to the noise of the street—and I do not mind the children above my head, though it really made my heart sore to hear that poor baby crying the whole night through on account of its teeth, poor lamb! When I heard it screeching like to end, I thought to myself how thankful I ought to be, that never had the stound of a toothach that I remember of, for as old as I am."

"Dear Macky, when shall I learn to view the evils of life as you do?" cried Edith.

"My dear, it cannot be expected that you should be so easily pleased as me; for have not I a great deal more given to me than I deserve, and did not I owe a great deal, under Providence, to your good papa? And was not he the person to give Johnnie Macauley no less than twenty

guineas in a present, to rigg him out when he came up a bare Hieland lad to London? 'Deed and Johnnie has not forgot it, and I'm sure never will."

"Papa was always generous," said Edith.

"He was that, and he meant to be very just too; but sometimes that is not so much some people's naature. I have promised Johnnie, that perhaps some day you will let him get a sight of you, just for your good papa's sake."

"I shall be happy in this land of strangers to see any one who will value me for papa's sake," said Edith, mournfully.

"O, but Johnnie will be very proud of being introduced to Glenroy's dochter; but maybe you'll not think just so much of Johnnie as he will think of you. I thought he would have been taller; but he is thick and stout, which is better, for the father of a family of seven childer, who has his bread to make. 'Deed I think he has been a lucky lad, considering; for, though his wife is not a beauty, she is a well-behaved, discreet woman, and he got well on to three thousand pound with her, forbye the good will of

the shop—and a thriving family; and though some of them have got his cast of the eye, what a mercy it is, there's not one of them pock-marked like him! And now, my dear, that I have seen you, I'll just go back to my breakfast, for it is but a step between us; and Johnnie was so good as to walk with me himself, and he's just taking a turn till I come out to him; and maybe it will not be so discreet in me to come so often the first day—so I will not see you again till dinner-time; but keep up your heart, my dear, and see what a fine sunny morning there is."

"Ah, Macky, what are its beauties here!" exclaimed Edith, with a sigh, as she thought of all that the genial ray of morning was gilding at Glenroy.

"Oh, my dear, do not speak that way; but think what a good thing it is to be able to rise up and to see the sun shine, and to behold even that bit of bonny blue sky that we see here, and the very bits of trees, though they are but stiff pookit things, yet they look as green and as cheerful as if they were growing in their own happy land—and there, at a window over the

way, is a grey-lintie, singing as blithely as if it were among the sweet gold blossoms of a whin-bush—and if it can be so merry in its prison, poor senseless thing, ought not we, who have good understandings, and the Word given to us, to be contented and thankful for our mercies?" And with an affectionate embrace, Mrs Macauley took leave of her beloved *protegée*, and toddled away.

CHAPTER VIII.

There was something in the hilarity of Mrs Macauley that always left a glow behind it, and Edith joined her relations at breakfast with less depression than she had hitherto felt; but, alas! it was only to experience a renewal of her disappointment, for the morning disclosed no charms in Mr and Mrs Ribley, which had been overlooked the preceding evening. They were both exactly what they had appeared at first sight. The only difference was, that he was, if possible, still more fidgetty and talkative, she more staid and serious.

"Come away, Miss—come away," cried he to Edith, as she entered; "sure you must have slept well—so beautifully quiet here—might hear a pin fall in the court—might fancy yourself in the Highlands, if it was not for the watch-

man and the neighbouring clocks—no clocks and watchmen there! And then by day you'll hear such beautiful bells—a beautiful chime has our church—Ha'nt it, Kitty, my dear? And then, when you've a mind to be gay, and see all that's going on, can be in Cheapside in four minutes and a half—and at the Bank, the India House, and Lloyd's, in no time—charming situation is our square—must show Miss your niece all these things—Shan't we, Kitty, my dear? Now here comes the muffin—must take it while it's hot—sure you never tasted such a muffin; from the very first muffin-maker in the world—Mogg's muffins' celebrated all over London.—Now only think how lucky it is you came to us before we left town—couldn't have given you Mogg's muffins in the country—hot rolls there—hot rolls more rural than muffins—A'n't they, Kitty, my dear?—only think, made three hundred thousand pounds by his muffins—white as snow, soft as down, are Mogg's muffins—A'n't they, Kitty, my dear?"

"They are extremely delicate indeed, Mr

Ribley; but with your leave, I would now propose we should arrange our plans for the day."

"Surely, surely, my dear; Miss your niece and her friends dine with us, and Charles—fine young man, is my nephew, cousin to the great Sir Charles Penshurst, Bart. of Penshurst Hall, M.P.—has been at Oxford—is going abroad—very fine gentleman is Charles Penshurst—A'n't he, Kitty, my dear?"

"He is, indeed, Mr Ribley, a fine young man at present."

"Kitty, my dear, what will you give our friends for dinner to-day? Pray, Miss," to Edith, "did you ever taste Birch's turtle-soup?"

Edith replied in the negative.

"Never tasted Birch's turtle-soup!" exclaimed he, in astonishment; "why Birch's turtle-soup goes all over the universe—East and West Indies, China, America—Scotland is sadly out of the way, to be sure. Why, if you never tasted Birch's turtle-soup, you have tasted nothing.—Kitty, my dear, let us have Birch's turtle-soup to-day—three quarts for a party of six, eh?"

"That is the proper quantity," said Mrs Ribley; "and as you observe, Mr Ribley, Scotland *is* sadly out of the way."

"Sure, my dear, we must show Miss your niece the Tower, and the Regalia, and the Lions —no lions in Scotland, eh?—Lions won't eat porridge, eh?—and we'll get Charles to go too— —must have him introduced to Miss Mogg— —old Mogg given up business—bought a fine house on our common—Myrtle Grove—can see from our parlour-window every body that goes in and out—beautiful creature is Miss Mogg— been educated at the first boarding-school in town—finished off at Paris—pays five hundred a-year to the lady who lives with her—and is to bring her out—suppose you haven't brought much money from Scotland—not much comes from it—not much goes to it either—Kitty, my dear, you'll get every thing that's proper for Miss your niece?"

Edith assured him she required nothing, which assurance seemed to please Mrs Ribley, who said, "You are very kind, Mr Ribley; and I shall certainly have pleasure in fulfilling your liberal

intentions when necessary. Young people know little of the value of money, and are very liable to be imposed upon, unless when they are guided by an experienced and judicious friend."

"Sure, my dear, you are always right, and now I'll walk as far as 'Change—and Kitty, my dear, shall I call at the fishmonger's, and order him to send you a nice piece of Thames salmon?—sad tricks played with fish—I remember the day Mr Alderman Winkle dined with us, bought a beautiful piece of Thames salmon myself—paid seven shillings a pound for it—six pounds and a quarter—and what do you think—it was changed for Scotch salmon!—changed for Scotch salmon!" repeated he, in a still louder and shriller key—"Never was so ashamed in my life as when I saw Mr Alderman Winkle helped to Scotch salmon—has been quite affronted—never asked me back!—And Mrs Ribley didn't get a card to Mrs Winkle's last party, and all because of the Scotch salmon."

And with this pathetic exclamation, Mr Ribley set off for 'Change, having previously settled

to return, and escort his lady and Edith to the Tower.

Edith would fain have had her good old friend Mrs Macauley included in the party, knowing how much her fresh and unsophisticated mind enjoyed every exhibition, whether of nature or art; but it formed no part of Mrs Ribley's system to do more than what she deemed her duty, in the strictest sense of the word; and if she discerned Edith's wishes, it was only to make it apparent they could not be gratified. A handsome carriage was at the door at the hour appointed; and, accompanied by Mr and Mrs Ribley, Edith set forth, in the most literal meaning of the phrase, to see the Lions. Probably the same train of feelings and reflections fill the minds of such as are in the habit of feeling and reflecting at all, on approaching, for the first time, the Tower of London,—its grim walls and sullen moat, associated as they are with so much that is dark and tragic in the page of English history. But these have been too often felt and expressed, to be repeated on the present occasion, and had Edith ventured to utter them, would

have been little understood by her vulgar-minded, matter-of-fact companions.

Mr Ribley was in raptures at all he saw, though probably seen for the twentieth time; and even turtle-soup and Thames salmon were for a time forgot in the nobler admiration of the lions and the crown. The judicious Mrs Ribley, however, reminded him of the lapse of time by her watch—which, like herself, was always correct—and they returned home. At the dinner hour Captain Malcolm and Mrs Macauley arrived, and were received by Mrs Ribley in a large, dull, stiff, respectable drawing-room, with its little serpentine sofas, and formal circle of chairs,—its small elaborate mirrors, stuck half-way up the wall,—its high mantelpiece, decorated with branching girandoles, and Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses,—its Brussels carpet, with festoons of roses,—its small bare satin-wood tables,—its tall twin fire-screens, embroidered forty years ago by Mrs Ribley's own hands; not a vestige of book or work, or any such lumber, was to be seen in this room, appropriated solely to the purpose of sitting in, bolt upright.

Great impatience was now expressed for the arrival of Mr Charles Penshurst, and the same rapid sketch of his history which had been given to Edith, was now repeated to Captain Malcolm:—" A fine young man—been studying at Oxford—going abroad for a year—a very genteel man, cousin, as I said, to Sir Charles Penshurst, Bart. and M.P.—married my sister —spent all her money, and broke her heart;— Charles, my nephew, must make a rich marriage —will settle handsomely upon him if he does —wouldn't go into the counting-house—must take either to the law or the church," and so on, till in a few minutes a cabriolet drove into the court, and in a second Mr Penshurst was announced. Edith had certainly not thought much about Mr Ribley's nephew, but it is scarcely possible to hear a person talked about without attaching some ideas to their name, and thus identifying them in our own imagination. In Mr Charles Penshurst, the nephew of Mr Ribley, and the intended lover of Miss Mogg, the muffin-maker's daughter, she had expected to behold oddity and vulgarity combined in no

common degree;—her surprise was therefore great at the entrance of an elegant-looking young man, with something even of aristocratic air and address; but there was scarcely time for an introduction, before the company were summoned to the dining-room, where stood a handsome silver tureen of Birch's turtle-soup in solitary majesty.

"Now," exclaimed Mr Ribley, "you shall taste nectar and ambrosia! Just half-a-guinea a quart! to think how cheap! Now, do taste it —Did you ever taste any thing so delicious?" And he looked at Edith, as though he expected her to swoon with delight at the first spoonful, and seemed rather mortified at the calm manner in which she received her initiation in this ambrosial banquet. To do Mr Ribley justice, he was as much of a benevolent as a selfish gourmand,—for although he enjoyed good things himself, he had no less pleasure in exciting the admiration of others at the super-excellence of his repasts; he was likewise a gourmand of the true John Bull breed, and, with the single exception of Birch's turtle-soup, liked nothing that was

not plain,—no matter how costly the material, provided it were of genuine English produce and manufacture. The same thorough English stamp of solid comfort and consistency pervaded the whole establishment; all denoted unostentatious wealth, that had gone down from father to son; there was nothing aimed at that was not accomplished, and if that was not in the first style of elegance or fashion, it seemed as if the deficiency were not from lack of means, but of ambition or pretension. All this proceeded from no superiority of thinking or acting in Mr or Mrs Ribley, but was merely the effect of the habits in which they had both been trained—those of wealthy London citizens, whose household gods were all united in one, and that one—comfort. With all Mr Ribley's absurdity there was so much good-nature, that even the most splenetic could scarcely have refrained from smiling at some of his sallies, which formed at least a relief to the dull monotony of the mistress of the house. Mr Penshurst, indeed, was no inconsiderable acquisition to the party; as if anxious to screen his uncle as much as possible

from observation, he took the lead in conversation, and carried it on with so much good sense and pleasantry, and was so perfectly well-bred, and possessed of the tone of good society, that he already stood fair in Captain Malcolm's estimation, and had almost captivated even Mrs Macauley. Under these appearances, Captain Malcolm felt tolerably satisfied at the prospect of leaving Edith for a time in her present situation. The good nature of Mr Ribley, the quiet correctness of his wife, the pleasing manners and amiable appearance of the nephew, the air of respectability and comfort diffused over the domestic arrangements—all these, though each taken singly could do little to excite her mind or promote her happiness, yet taken altogether, seemed to form as inoffensive a home as circumstances had led him to expect.

A few successive days passed on, during which the microcosm of London was gradually unfolded to Edith's wondering gaze. The august simplicity of St Paul's, the hallowed perfections of Westminster Abbey—these, the two great landmarks of the grand and the beautiful, with the

various spectacles and exhibitions, each replete with novelty and interest,—the ceaseless flow of living multitudes and splendid equipages, so different from the dull vacuity, or vulgar bustle of other towns, were a perpetual, though unconscious stimulus to the attention of the novice, as they swept along in all the brilliancy and variety of wealth and fashion. In a short time, Edith's good taste and right feeling would have led her to perceive the unsatisfactory nature of the empty pomp and senseless glitter that everywhere courted her eye. But who ever made such a discovery, when for the first time seeing London? Yet the gay and the fashionable would have smiled in scorn at the objects that excited Edith's notice, and made even her City life, notwithstanding Mrs Ribley's deliberate caution, appear a rapid whirl of novelty and variety. Mr Penshurst was frequently of their parties, and by his general, if not very profound, knowledge of society, as well as of arts and literature, greatly added to the enjoyment, by the information he contrived to impart. He also served to restrain the exuberance of Mr Ribley's

remarks, as it was evident his uncle regarded him with a degree of deference, at least equal to that which he so lavishly bestowed upon his " Kitty, my dear ;" and, in public, he formed a sort of barrier to the obstreperous vulgarity of Mr Ribley. He was ever ready to screen Edith from his attentions, and to interpose his arm, when she would otherwise have been obliged to accept Mr Ribley's. These were trifling services, to be sure ; but " trifles make the sum of human things," and even the wisest must have sometimes felt their importance.

CHAPTER IX.

One morning as Mr Ribley, according to custom, gabbled the newspapers aloud, under the head of Fashionable Intelligence of the Day, he read as follows: "Lady Waldegrave has issued cards for her first ball, which will take place at Waldegrave House on the 29th, on a scale of unprecedented magnificence. Upon this occasion the whole *suite* of noble apartments, which have been recently fitted up, will be thrown open." And immediately followed—"We regret to state, that Lady Elizabeth Malcolm's musical party, which was to have taken place at her residence in Brook Street, has been postponed on account of her ladyship's indisposition."

Till now, Edith had not been aware of the return of her relations to England, the notice

of their arrival amongst a host of other "fashionables," a few weeks before, having escaped Mr Ribley's observation. And when, soon after her own arrival in London, she had been interrogated by Mrs Ribley, as to the state of her father's family, and the footing she was upon with his widow and heir, she had evaded the enquiries as much as she could, by simply stating, that, owing to their absence on the Continent, she had had little or no intercourse with them. But now it seemed they were inhabitants of the same city—how near, yet how widely asunder! Geographical distance no longer separated them, but far stronger barriers were between. How closely allied by blood and connexion, by the memory of childhood, and the love, and affection, and trust of former days; but how disunited by injuries never to be repaired—by hopes, thoughts, feelings—by all those qualities of mind and heart which form the character, and which never again could amalgamate together! There was something humiliating, too, circumstanced as she now was, in courting their notice. In the days of her prosperity, how

had her heart been wrung, and her affections trampled upon by them! And fallen as she was, into poverty, and obscurity, and dependence, identified with the plebeian vulgar, to claim kindred with them now,—oh! there was humiliation in the thought! Yet, without explaining to her inquisitive relations more than she chose to reveal, (for, with the prying curiosity of little minds, no half communication would have satisfied them,) how was she to refuse her assent to the decision they had already formed for her, that it was her duty to wait upon Lady Elizabeth, and that without delay. Harassed and perplexed, she retired to her own apartment, to "commune with her own heart," and ask if it indeed could "be still," even when brought in contact with those who had so deeply injured her.

In the midst of her doubts and perplexity, Mrs Macauley arrived, and Edith made known to her the cause of her disquiet. Mrs Macauley was silent for a few minutes, and the tears swelled in her eyes; at last she said, "'Deed, and your feelings are quite natural, my darling, for this is

but a poor hole for Glenroy's daughter to be seen dwellin' in; but since it has pleased God to permit it for a time, (for no fault of yours that we can see,) I think we ought not to be ashamed to show ourselves."

" You say true, dear Macky, but still—" Edith stopped and sighed.

" No doubt they're a bad pack, and deserve no favour at your hands, my darling; but, for all that, you know we are commanded to forgive even our very enemies."

" I have forgiven long, long since."

" 'Deed, I do not doubt it, for you was always a gentle, forgiving creature; but, for all that, you know we never can be sure we have forgiven, unless we are ready and willing to be reconciled."

" I *am* ready to be reconciled," said Edith, " but surely it is not my part to court the reconciliation? were they in my situation, and I in theirs, it would be otherwise."

" O, I'm sure if they were reduced to straits, any one of them, you would be the very first to go and help them, and be kind and loving to

them. But, it's because they have more of this world's pelf, that we think shame to let them see that we are not so grand and so rich as we once were; and we think that's our humility, when maybe it's nothing but pride—ugly pride, as the childer's book calls it—working in our hearts."

Edith mused for a little while, then said, "You are right, dear Macky, it *is* pride that struggles in my heart, and would prevent me from doing what I feel it is my duty to do—to wait upon my father's widow. If I could have power to confer any thing upon her, any mere worldly gift, I should not hesitate for a single instant—there would be no self-sacrifice there; but to go poor, dependent, and friendless——" tears burst from her eyes—then throwing her arms round her old friend's neck, "but not friendless," she cried, "while I have you to love and counsel me in the path of duty."

The result was, that she should that very day wait upon Lady Elizabeth, as the next was that fixed for the Ribleys leaving town for the summer.

Accordingly, at the early hour of two, Edith

set out, accompanied by Mr and Mrs Ribley, who, in case of her finding access, were to drop her there, and proceed to take their "ride" in the Park, while she paid her visit.

Upon sending up her card, she was admitted, and ushered into a small room, where a hot sun streamed through rose-coloured curtains, and a still hotter fire blazed, as if for the benefit of three lap-dogs, who lay rolled up on cushions before it. Two paroquets were scolding at one side; on the other, sunk in a *fauteuil*, and enveloped in shawls, sat her ladyship, with breakfast before her, and a bullfinch pecking sugar; while chairs, tables, couches, cabinets, musical instruments, busts, screens, plants, flowers, and china, literally left scarcely room for the sole of the foot to tread its way through this labyrinth. Edith, however, succeeded in steering her course to the middle of the room, where she was assaulted by the three dogs.

"Don't be afraid, my dear," called her ladyship, in a weak, tremulous voice, as she laid her cheek to Edith's; "they are the sweetest loves! —they never do bite, except in play.—Amor,

Biondina, Chéri, have done !—You remember my darlings, Amoretta and Bijou ?" putting her handkerchief to her eyes. " But it is too sad ; we won't talk of such things—And dearest Amor is getting delicate !" with a deep sigh. " My darling Bully, don't make yourself sick !—— When did you come to town, my dear ? I assure you I am quite happy to see you ; and you look very well—very well indeed !"

This was said with a tone of chagrin, as she glanced from Edith's lovely serene countenance, and finely-moulded form, to her own haggard, peevish face, and shrivelled, made-up shape, which not even the aid of an elegant *déshabillé* could either adorn or disguise. In answer to Edith's enquiries she replied,—" Speak louder, my dear. I have got a little cold, and am so wrapped up I can't hear any thing." The fact was, she was now very deaf, and somewhat blind, —two disgraceful circumstances, which she would fain have passed over. " Yes, I *have* got a cold, which would have prevented my singing to-night, so I thought it best to put off my party. —You are more *embonpoint* than you used to be ;

you must beware of that.—Are you fond of birds? These paroquets were a present from Florinda. She is in town—have you not met her yet?—Were you not at Lady Ellington's ball last night? I have got a little cold, and did not go. I am nursing myself, in hopes I shall be able for the Duchess of St Leger's party to-morrow. Perhaps you go?—I would offer to call for you, but the fact is, Lady Moubray is to call for me in her carriage;—but another time I shall be quite happy to take you.—And, by the by, can I do any thing for you? My milliner, Madame La Roque, is perfect—rather expensive, to be sure; but one must pay for pretty things, you know. I am sure Florinda will be delighted to do any thing in the world for you, and will be happy to send you a card for her ball—Pray what is your address?—for I really could not make it out upon your card; something Court, is it not?—Where *can* that be, my dear?"

Edith blushed as she replied, that she was to leave town the following day; then added, "I reside in the City with relations of my mother."

"Shocking! In the City! why that's too

dreadful! How could you think of going to such a place?—we must endeavour to get you out of it as soon as we can," said her ladyship, gravely. " I must consider what is to be done for you—I forget whether poor dear Glenroy left much fortune—I'm afraid not—that's a pity—but it can't be helped. *Apropos*, I have got such a pretty set of coral for you! I must desire my maid to fetch them," and she rang the bell; but before it was answered, she exclaimed, " Ah, by the by, I forgot them in the hurry and the multitude of affairs, on leaving Naples—Never mind, I shall get something for you here; we can do that any day.—Now, before we part, my dear," continued she, " let me settle something for you. You are with very good sort of people of course; but, you know, to be of any service to you while you live in the City, is out of the question. And to have any success in the world, you must leave it immediately. I am sure Florinda would tell you the same thing. As for Sir Reginald," here she shrugged her shoulders, then in a low tone whispered, " let me tell you, my dear, you had an escape from

that man—most unfortunately for my poor dear Florinda—in fact, it was quite a *mésalliance* for her. But she quite sacrificed herself to the romantic goodness of her heart. She thought it necessary to fall in love with him, because he had saved her from being drowned; but as I said to her, why if your footman had saved you from drowning, would you have thought it necessary to marry *him?* But, however, we shall not talk of that at present—we must think of what can be done to save you. My house, as you see, is very small, and I require a great deal of accommodation; but perhaps I might—yes, I rather think I could manage to have a room for you during the few weeks I shall remain in town—and then"——

Here Edith, with thanks, begged leave to decline the honour intended, assuring her that she was satisfied to remain in her present situation; that it was one she had voluntarily chosen for a time; and therefore it would be using Mr and Mrs Ribley very ill, were she to quit their house, merely because their station in life was not sufficiently elevated.

"Why you ought never to have gone to such a place. Certainly my permission ought to have been asked before you involved yourself in a manner which may put it quite out of my power to bring you forward. How can I possibly be of any service to you, after you have spent six weeks in such society? How could I possibly introduce you with any effect? Scotland and Scotch people, and Scotch books and scenery, and so forth, happen to be in fashion at present; and I could present you perfectly well, as just arrived from Scotland. And as at present there is rather a want of any thing very *distingué* amongst the *débutantes* of the season, (Florinda unhappily being out of the field,) with your face and figure, both, I must say, astonishingly improved, I have no doubt you would cause a sensation, and get very well married before the end of the season. But if you remain where you are, I can positively do nothing for you."

Here Mr Ribley's carriage was announced, and Edith could only repeat what she had before said, as she hastened to take leave.

"Well, I shall try what can be done, and whether Florinda can send you a card for her ball. But where in the world will it find you?"

"I should be sorry that Lady Waldegrave took so unnecessary a trouble," replied Edith, "since I could not, even if I would, avail myself of it. I leave town to-morrow with Mr and Mrs Ribley."

Her ladyship here began to remonstrate still more vehemently on the impropriety of her remaining where she was; but Edith was firm in her resolution to remain where she had voluntarily placed herself; and, indeed, the inducement held out by Lady Elizabeth was sufficient in itself to make her recoil from her proposal. Edith was too ignorant of the little, mean, crooked ways of the world, to discern aught but mere weak, mistaken kindness in her stepmother's anxiety, to have her thus brought forward. But the fact was, her ladyship had her own ends to answer in this "fair seeming show." She had fallen very much into the "sear and yellow leaf" of fashionable notoriety—her parties were ill attended—she was not invited to those she

wished most to be at—and when she went into public, she found herself slighted and neglected. In short, her life was one constant scene of petty mortifications, and insignificant attempts to regain her place in society—a place long since filled up by others, who, in their turn, would be pushed aside, when their little day was passed. She had, however, enough of worldly craft to be aware that she might rise into consequence, if she could introduce any thing to cause a sensation in the gay world. She had, indeed, a recent example before her eyes, in the wonderful success which had attended a declining dowager's introduction of a handsome niece; and the first sight of Edith immediately suggested to her what great *éclat* she might attain by becoming the patroness of one young, beautiful, and a novelty—one whose birth would not disgrace her, and whose native grace and elegance would stand the scrutiny even of the ill-natured well-bred world.

CHAPTER X.

The time had now come when Edith was to part from her kind friend Captain Malcolm, she knew not for how long. He was to set out for Inch Orran the same day that she was to leave London.

"Remember, Edith," said he, as he parted from her—"remember that Inch Orran is still your home, and that we shall never cease to consider you as one of ourselves—a daughter's place is yours in our hearts, and at our board, while I live—when I die, a daughter's provision will be yours. Promise me, then, before we part, you will always, and in all circumstances, still be one of us!"

Edith's heart was too full to speak; but she pressed the hand of her excellent friend in hers,

for she felt as if she were again losing a father's protection, and was now in truth an orphan.

Edith felt this parting the more, that she was also to be separated, though but for a short time, from her faithful Mrs Macauley. With the help of her nephew Johnnie, she said, she had procured a very comfortable and respectable lodging, within half a mile of Mr Ribley's villa; but it was undergoing some repairs, and would not be ready till the week following that in which her loved *protegée* was to leave town.

Mrs Ribley, although aware of the faithful creature's attachment, made no offer of accommodating her with an apartment at the Grove; for Mrs Ribley was little given to consult feelings upon any occasion, and rather seemed to consider them as weaknesses, which ought not to be indulged. Edith had been accustomed to associate ideas of romantic seclusion with the very name of the country; and soon weary and exhausted with wondering at the works of art, she had longed for the calm soothing influence of nature. But the nature of a gentlemanly

English village, how different from the nature of a Highland chief's mountain solitudes!

Mr Ribley's villa, the Grove, (so called from a little patch of poplars and Portugal laurels at the back of the house,) was in one of the many pretty villages with which the environs of London abound. It stood at the end, and a little apart from a row of houses, in front of which was a broad gravel walk, garnished with a row of poplars, and dignified by the appellation of the Mall. Before this stretched a fine expanse of common, interspersed with other rows and crescents, as well as with detached and more rural dwellings; some embowered in their own little grove, or tiny park and pleasure-ground; others with their simple paddock and little walled garden; while a still humbler class boasted only of a flower-plat, and a single tree of stately growth, shading their thatched roof and latticed window.

Mrs Ribley had frequently alluded to the plan of life that was to be pursued when they should be settled in the country, as something that was to be no less edifying than delightful. And

though Edith's expectations were certainly not sanguine as to the pleasure she was to experience from being associated in any way with her aunt, still she was not prepared for any thing so intolerable as the mode of life she found chalked out for her,—to sit in the parlour all the morning with this inane pair—Mrs Ribley hemming frills for Mr Ribley's shirts, while he gabbled nonsense, or by his lady's desire read aloud some edifying and instructive work of her own selection. To do poor Mr Ribley justice, he would have resisted the task, if he had ever been in the way of resisting any of Kitty my dear's commands; but all that he had energy for, was to try every shift to avoid it. Then to play over on an indifferent instrument Mrs Ribley's old sonatas, and sing her antiquated airs—to pay and receive visits—take an airing—thus was the morning consumed; while the evening was devoted to walking backwards and forwards on the Mall, chatting and gossiping with dull idlers like themselves. The only relief to this life of monotony was, that Mr Penshurst generally drove out to dinner, and contrived to secure Edith's arm for the evening

walk. Mr and Mrs Ribley expressed their surprise to each other, at the frequency and length of their nephew's visits; but Mr Ribley always settled the point by summing up his animadversions with, "Ah, Charles knows what he's about—looking after the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg. Three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!"

Nothing could be more methodical than Mrs Ribley—she had her days, her hours, her months, her minutes marked out, each and all for their own especial purpose, and these purposes the most dull and insignificant imaginable. "'Twere greatly wise," says Young, "to talk with our past hours, and ask them what report they bear to Heaven." But meagre and unsatisfactory would have been the register of Mrs Ribley's doings, even on earth. Hers were the doings of a dull, worldly mind, operating in the narrow sphere of earthly duties, and affixing undue importance to the most trivial affairs of life. And perhaps, of all the varieties of character, there are few more insupportable as a companion than a dull serious trifler. Even Mr Ribley's silly, vulgar loquacity,

was less irksome than the "leaden reiteration" of his lady.

It was Mr Ribley's regular practice, every morning after breakfast, to take his station at the parlour window, to spy all that could be spied, and to communicate the knowledge so acquired to Kitty my dear, as she sat at her work; not that he confined himself to that particular time for taking his observations, for he was one of those restless, fidgetty bodies, who never can be still, and his head was to be seen poking out at the window, or peering over the Venetian-blinds, all the hours of the day; but that was a favourite hour with him, as the one in which the various trades-people were, with true English punctuality, making the rounds of the village, to supply their customers with provisions for the day. This was a high treat to Mr Ribley, and thus was he wont to impart his information to his lady:

"Kitty, my dear, here's the butcher's boy with some lamb chops and a loin of very nice-looking veal,—is that right?"

"Quite right, thank you, Mr Ribley."

"And a shoulder of mutton for the servants, eh?"

"Perfectly, Mr Ribley."

"Kitty, my dear, I suspect the Moggs have taken possession of Myrtle Grove: I saw the butcher's boy hand in just now a very fine-looking fillet of veal."

"Indeed! that does look as if they had arrived, Mr Ribley."

"And, Kitty, my dear, there's a loin of pork, a calf's head, and a rump steak gone to Mrs Martha Budgell—What *can* she be doing with three meats? Single lady—bad health—only two servants—very rich, to be sure—and three meats—Very odd, a'n't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"'Tis, indeed, Mr Ribley; there must be sad waste, I fear, with the servants."

"There's a shin of beef and brisket of veal to the Blackets,—and only a scrag of mutton for poor Miss Mudge! Sad thing is a scrag of mutton, a'n't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"'Tis, indeed, sad to those who have known better, Mr Ribley!"

"There's such a noble sirloin going to our

neighbour, Mr Claridge—thirty pound weight, I'm sure! why, it does one's heart good to see such a sirloin! Sure they must be going to have a party!"

"I think it very probable, Mr Ribley."

"But here's the poulterer: A pair of most beautiful plump ducklings for ourselves: and now he has given in a green goose to Mr Claridge; and there, there, I declare, is a delicate little turkey poult to Mr Mogg! Sure there must be some mistake there! white meat, white fowl! brown meat, brown fowl! Now, you may depend upon it, the poulterer has made a mistake—the turkey must have been for Mr Claridge, the green goose for Mr Mogg: then all would be right; there's white meat, brown bird—brown meat, white bird; but if they don't find out the mistake, only conceive how awkward it will be? Don't you think so, Kitty, my dear?"

"Uncommonly so indeed, Mr Ribley; but perhaps something may depend upon the fish they are to have."

"That's very true, Kitty, my dear, something *may* depend upon that. A very fine pullet, and

half-a-dozen plovers' eggs, for Mrs Martha—sure she must be picking up!"

"Charming air has our Common, Mr Ribley!"

"I can't think enough of the veal and the turkey poult having gone to them, and the beef and the ducklings to the Claridges!—Sure we must find out whether there has been a mistake between the Moggs and the Claridges, and whether it was the fault of the butcher or the poulterer.—Why, you know, Kitty, my dear, the very same might happen to ourselves!"

"It might indeed, Mr Ribley. But perhaps you will now favour us with a little improving reading?"

"Good la! come here, my dear—only see!—here's the fishmonger with a pair of mullets for us, stiff as pokers, I declare!—and—sure if he a'n't taking a pair of soles to the Moggs!—and let us see what he has got for the Claridges—A beautiful eel for Mrs Martha—sure she must be quite well!—Now, now, let us see what—I declare, if there a'n't a large piece of salmon and two lobsters for the Claridges!—salmon and

lobsters! sirloin and green goose!—why, who ever heard of such a dinner? Well, sure that *is* the very strangest thing—a'n't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"'Tis indeed a bad arrangement, Mr Ribley."

"And to think of the Moggs, with three hundred thousand pound, having white meat, white fish, white fowl! I declare I shouldn't wonder if their soup was white too!"

"Indeed I shouldn't wonder, Mr Ribley, some people are so *very* odd!"

Much more of the same colloquy went on, till the forms of the butcher, fishmonger, poulterers' boys, faded into distance, or vanished abruptly from the view.

CHAPTER XI.

As the mind commonly finds its own level in society, it may be inferred that Mr and Mrs Ribley's circle of acquaintances was composed of common-place, vulgar-minded persons, like themselves, full of the paltry gossip and petty detail of the narrow sphere in which they moved. Cards had been exchanged with Miss Mogg, but no introduction had yet taken place—occasional glimpses, however, had been caught of her by Mr Ribley, as she walked, accompanied by the lady who lived with her as her *chaperon*—or, as she was to be seen sometimes, driving out with "Old Mogg," in a very handsome carriage with richly liveried attendants.

Amongst the little coterie of the Mall and its neighbourhood, there was a constant interchange of tea-drinkings, or, still worse, what they called

evening parties, including cards, cake, music, lemonade, and *ennui*. It was at one of these that the "elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg" made her first appearance, and Edith was again surprised to behold, in the person of the muffin-maker's daughter, a very pretty, fashionable-looking girl, who talked, laughed, played, and sung, in a very well-taught manner. In short, Miss Mogg was like thousands of other pretty girls who have been educated at fashionable boarding-schools, and acquired that external polish which is now the great aim and end of education to impart. Edith had not mixed much in general society, but she had been all her life accustomed to do the honours of her father's house to many a noble and distinguished guest, and to receive, in return, those marked and peculiar attentions due to the fair and youthful mistress of a noble establishment. But now, amidst this plebeian coterie, she found herself a person of no consequence whatever, compared to Miss Mogg, the muffin-maker's daughter—so relative a thing is personal importance! She was slightly, and civilly, sometimes compassionately, spoken

to, evidently as the poor dependent niece who lived with good Mrs Ribley; but all was wonder, and admiration, and exclamation, at the beauty, the dress, the accomplishments, of the charming Miss Mogg. Edith felt the difference, but she had so little personal pride or vanity that she felt it without pain—except as it forced upon her the retrospect of changed days, and fallen fortunes. Mr Penshurst, who unexpectedly joined the party, was the only one who did not enter the charmed circle which surrounded Miss Mogg as she sat at the piano, but took his station by Edith, who sat a little apart. This *faux pas* at the very outset would not have been passed over in silence by Mr Ribley, had not he and his lady been both at cards in the back drawing-room, and ignorant of what was going on, while Edith, viewing him as the intended lover of Miss Mogg, gave him credit for the delicacy which kept him from jostling and elbowing with the crowd of her admirers.

"How you must despise us mercenary English," said he to Edith, as he stood by her chair, and looked with something like scorn on the

rest of the company, " when you see the homage we render to mere wealth ?"

" Is it not the universal idol, under some form or other ?" replied she.

" Yes, with the vulgar; even mere vulgar coin commands reverence—but you, I am sure, would be no worshipper of wealth under any form."

" Every country—nay, every heart, has perhaps its own false deity," said Edith.

" It may be so, but surely there are none so vulgarizing as the love of money. When I think of the mass of wealth which even this room contains, it almost sickens me at the thought of riches. Here it displays none of those charms which render it so fascinating in refined society; and, I confess, the idol appears to me in all its native deformity."

" I should imagine it was seldom seen to greater advantage than in the person of Miss Mogg," said Edith; " she is very pretty."

" Yes, she would look very well even at Almack's. She sings well, and, I have no doubt, waltzes well," replied he, carelessly. " I see

you are incredulous about the sincerity of my homage at a nobler shrine; but you are right, Miss Mogg is a very *nice* girl, to use the favourite expression of the *caste* to which I *partly* belong; not that I mean to affect any aristocratic airs," he added, smiling, "or to depreciate the excellence of a body of people so respectable as that of the commercial class of England—in it there are many members who would do honour to the highest rank or station, just as there are patricians by birth who would disgrace the most plebeian extraction—I only regret that you should have been made acquainted with so unfavourable a specimen of English taste and manners."

"I flatter myself," said Edith, "I am more in the way of losing prejudices than of acquiring them. I have already got rid of a few since I came to England."

"So have I, since you came to England. Come, let us compare notes. In Mrs Ribley's niece, I expected to behold—no, I really cannot bring myself to describe what I expected to find

you—except that it was in every thing the reverse of what you are."

"That may or may not be a compliment," said Edith; "but since you have set me such an example of candour, I can do no less than follow it, as I am sure Mr Ribley's unseen nephew might have rivalled Mrs Ribley's niece."

Mr Penshurst laughed while he said, "It is well the phantoms have destroyed each other; let us hope they never again may revive even in imagination." Then, as the card parties in which Mr and Mrs Ribley had been engaged broke up, and they were entering the room, he exclaimed, "But I must be presented to Miss Mogg, if I would prevent my good uncle from exposing himself and me." He then hastened towards the spot where she was, in time to save appearances, and poor Mr Ribley could scarcely restrain his transports when he beheld his nephew actually engaged in conversation with "the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg."

The entertainment was drawing to a close—the company took leave—and as the distance was short, and the evening fine, Mrs Ribley walked

home in her clogs and calash, leaning on Mr Ribley, while Edith was, as usual, consigned to the care of Charles Penshurst. As they walked along, Mr Ribley kept repeating, "Sweet pretty creature is Miss Mogg, and so affable! All the gentlemen are in love with her—A'n't they, Kitty, my dear? Hope she noticed you peticklarly, Charles? And you may depend upon it, old Mogg's in a dropsy, and she'll have three hundred thousand pound! Three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!!!"

CHAPTER XII.

Edith had felt the want of her kind, merry-hearted Mrs Macauley, and had many times walked to the cottage where her lodgings were taken for her, to watch, and, if possible, hasten the progress of the little alterations that were taking place, and which had been protracted from one week to nearly three. These were now completed, and she came, blithe as a bee, to take possession of her apartments. The cottage belonged to a respectable, elderly pair, well skilled in all those little domestic comforts which make an English cottage a perfect epitome of simple enjoyment. It was an irregular, old-fashioned building, with pointed gables, and latticed windows, shrouded amongst honeysuckles and jasmine, and surrounded on three sides with a garden at least coeval with itself, which

opened upon a wild secluded corner of the common, sprinkled with aged thorns, and gay with furze. From this diverged many a green and bosky lane,

"Bower'd with wild roses and the clasping woodbine."

It was a happy meeting between Edith and her old friend; for although no companion for the cultivated mind and refined taste of her *elève*, still, in the simple overflowings of her love, and the hilarity of her temper, Edith found a charm which she would vainly have sought for even in the most polished intercourse of society. If, as Adam Smith says, "the greatest pleasure in life consists in being beloved," that pleasure assuredly was Edith's, and her own heart seemed to revive and expand beneath the brightening influence of another's joy.

"O, my darling!" cried she, as the tears of delight rolled down her somewhat faded cheeks, "how happy I am to see you again!—not but what I've seen you every night in my dreams since we parted—and was not that a great comfort to me, think you, and one I ought to be

very grateful for? 'Deed I think so, for it is not every body that has so great a gift, if I may say so, vouchsafed to them. Oh, what would have become of me in the heart of that great dungeon, if I had never been blessed with a sight of your sweet face!"

"Dear Macky!" said Edith, as she returned the fond embrace, "I trust you have been well, and tolerably happy even in the heart of your dungeon, as you call London?"

"'Deed, I ought to be very happy, for surely I am a surprising creature, to be so stout at my great age,—and to have the sense granted me, too, to be sensible of the favour that has been shown me; for some have the strength without the sense, and some have the sense, but are weak in the body; but though your good papa was not pleased to think I had sense, yet I always thought I had my share, and that I would have to give an account of that, as well as of my great health, some day."

"You have been very busy, then, doing good, as usual? Come, tell me what you have been about, dear Macky, since I left you."

"O, 'deed, my doings have been but small, for they were all with Johnnie's people, poor things! Two of them, Duncan and Nancy, took the nettlerush, poor lambs, and that made them very crabbit and ill to manage, especially as their mother, poor body, is rather—is just maybe too good to them in the way of humouring them,—which, to be sure, is very naatral, considering what poor, pinging-like things they are; and Archie, he was sent home from the boarding-school with the mumps, and his hand was never out of mischief; but is it not very naatral, considering how strict they keep poor childer at they schools, that they should go like teegers when they get out of them? Then the baby had a sad towt with its teeth; and the lass that takes care of the bairns, she burnt her hand, and was not able to part them when they fought wi' one another. I really thought Archie and Duncan would have ruggit the very heads off one another, poor things, so it was a great mercy I chanced to be in the family at the time when I was able to help them in their straits; and now they're all set to rights again—Archie away back

to the school, and the baby has cut two great teeth, and the lass's hand is healed, and they're all to come down and take their dinner wi' me next Saturday, and that will be a fine ploy, and they will be so pleased to see how comfortable I am. This is really a bit bonny spot, and a neat house, and discreet, purpose-like bodies that keep it; and so, my love, we ought to be thankful, even though we are in England, for we might have been in a worse place."

Edith would gladly have exchanged the senseless, soulless life and luxurious board of the Ribleys, for the heartfelt pleasures and simple fare she would have enjoyed with her old friend, but that might not be; she resolved, however, to appropriate her morning hours to her, as also such other portions of the day as she could abstract from the claims of Mrs Ribley. Frequent though formal invitations were also given to Mrs Macauley to dine or drink tea at the Grove; and thus several weeks passed away without any greater varieties than occasional parties, when Miss Mogg always shone forth as the star of the evening.

Edith had all her life been accustomed to mix freely in gentlemen's society, and to receive a great deal of attention, without attaching to it any of those ideas of love and marriage, or even exclusive admiration, which young ladies are so apt to indulge, when they find themselves at all distinguished beyond the common forms of well-bred indifference. She, therefore, conversed with gentlemen with the same absence of design, and consequent ease of deportment, as she would have done with companions of her own sex, and there was a simple quiet refinement in her manner, equally remote from prudery as from coquetry. Something of this might also have been owing to her affections having been so exclusively engrossed by one object. These affections had been deeply wounded, and though the wound itself had long since closed, it had been succeeded by an insensibility which rendered her alike unconscious of, and indifferent to, ordinary impressions. Not even Mrs Ribley, with all her cold correctness, could find fault with the manners of her niece; not that she admired them; they lacked that formality which

with her was the criterion of virtue, and made it difficult for her to comprehend how far there could be purity of heart, and sincerity of mind, and dignity of behaviour, without this her guardian angel to protect the whole. Although she could not say that Edith encouraged the attentions of Charles Penshurst, she began to suspect that Charles Penshurst was rather too particular and unremitting in his attentions to Edith.

At length an *éclaircissement* took place. One day as the ladies sat in solemn silence at their work, Mr Ribley came twaddling into the room, his wig all awry, his eyes goggling, his hands shaking, and his whole person indicative of great mental agitation. He looked for a minute or two, as if doubting the evidence of his own senses; then, with a sort of scream, burst forth, "Refused Miss Mogg! refused Miss Mogg! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!" And he wrung his hands, and ambled up and down the room, repeating the same thing at least a dozen times to himself.

"Pray be composed, Mr Ribley," said his lady, as she calmly threaded her needle, and

even made a knot at the end of her thread; "be composed pray, Mr Ribley."

"Why, Kitty, my dear, you don't know—why now what do you think? After all, such a a fine education—been at Oxford—and—and would have settled fifty thousand pound upon him at once—to refuse Miss Mogg!" Here his voice rose again to a treble shriek, "To refuse Miss Mogg! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg, as sure as I'm alive, in a dropsy! Seen him myself—legs as thick as three of mine; a'n't they, Kitty, my dear?"

"Indeed! the poor old gentleman!—But I have not seen Mr Mogg of a great while, Mr Ribley."

"Well, all over now," said he, in a calmer tone, and standing still—"refuses to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg! refuses Miss Mogg! and after I had sounded old Mogg myself"——

Here Edith had risen to quit the room, that Mrs Ribley might be more at liberty to receive the full disclosure she saw about to take place. But Mrs Ribley, with compressed lips, glassy eyes, and an emphatic waive of the head, said,

"You will oblige me by remaining where you are, Edith, till we have finished these frills. It is of importance that the frills that are to be worn together should be hemmed together."

"Sounded old Mogg myself! found him quite agreeable—told him what a fine young man my nephew is—cousin to Sir Charles Penshurst—only one between him and the title—settle fifty thousand pounds upon him, myself—and after all, to refuse to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg! the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!"

"'Tis indeed very extraordinary, Mr Ribley, that Charles should be so disobedient, when it's all for his own advantage too." And she cast a look of cold scrutiny at Edith, who sat quite unconscious, either of it, or of the suspicions which were now beginning to be bodied forth in Mrs Ribley's dull brain. "Can you assign no probable motive, Miss Malcolm," said she, "for this extraordinary behaviour of Mr Penshurst?"

Edith looked with such innocent surprise, as might almost have sufficed to answer the ques-

tion. "None," replied she, "except that he does not particularly admire Miss Mogg, I suppose."

"Not admire Miss Mogg!" exclaimed Mr Ribley; "not admire three hundred thousand pound! Sure he can't be such a fool, eh, Kitty, my dear?"

"I should be still more surprised, if he is capable of disobeying such an uncle as you have been to him, Mr Ribley." Then turning to Edith, "If you know who Mr Penshurst does not admire, can you tell us whom he does admire?" And Mrs Ribley fixed her large solemn eyes full upon her face, as she put the interrogation.

The truth for the first time flashed upon Edith's mind. She saw she was suspected, and with the rapidity of lightning various little circumstances, which at the time she had passed carelessly by, now darted into her mind, as if to bring conviction home to her. With a deepened colour she said, "I have never been honoured with Mr Penshurst's confidence. I beg I may therefore be spared any farther discussion on a

subject in which I never can be interested, otherwise than as the friend of the parties."

Then calmly laying aside her work, she rose and left the room—Mr Ribley's pathetic exclamations resounding in her ear as she closed the door.

Desirous of avoiding being again called to a discussion, which delicacy forbade that she should ever have been made acquainted with, she resolved to go and pass the day with Mrs Macauley, and thus be out of the way of this unpleasant family altercation. Leaving a message, therefore, with the servant, to say where she had gone, she set out on her walk alone; contrary to Mrs Ribley's disapproval of young ladies walking by themselves. She had gone but a little way from the house, when she found herself overtaken and joined by the very person she most wished to avoid—Mr Penshurst. He offered her his arm as usual, which for the first time she hesitated to accept; and with some embarrassment added, that, as she was going to spend the day with her friend, she begged she might not interfere with his arrangements.

"Is there no other reason for your declining my attendance?" he enquired, looking earnestly at her.

Edith was silent; for truth forbade her to say there was not, and to acknowledge there was, would have been to lead to an explanation she wished to avoid.

But her companion seemed to penetrate her motive, for he said, "I see how it is—you are aware of what has passed between my good uncle and me, and you are afraid to give countenance to the rebellious nephew."

"I certainly wish to avoid doing any thing that might be construed into disrespect of Mr and Mrs Ribley," replied Edith.

"But I flatter myself you do not carry your respect for their prejudices beyond your wishes for my happiness?"

"I would hope that both might be combined," replied Edith.

"Impossible in the present case—and if I believed you sincere, or at least that you were aware of the nature of the hope you have just expressed, suffer me to say, it would give me incalculable pain."

"The wish *was* sincere," said Edith, gently; "the pain was unintentional."

"You wish then," said Mr Penshurst, warmly, "that I should sacrifice myself for gold—that I should join the mean herd who are paying court to the muffin-maker's daughter—that I should suffer my well-meaning, but misjudging uncle, to set about negotiating for my future happiness, just as he would for a transfer of his bank-stock. Is this what you wish? No. I am sure it cannot be."

"I have certainly no wish to give even an opinion in a matter which, pardon me for saying, ought to be confined entirely to the parties themselves, Mr Penshurst."

"Pardon me! I acknowledge I have taken a liberty in intruding myself and my concerns on your attention; but I had flattered myself, that neither were so entirely insignificant as to be wholly beneath your notice."

"My notice can be of no value," said Edith, "for it can render you no service. I possess no influence whatever with either Mr or Mrs Ribley."

"And if you did," interrupted he, "I trust it would not be used in such a cause; for it is too absurd a one to require serious interference; and I certainly never should have even alluded to it, had I not already experienced the bad effects of my uncle's imprudence, in the distance of your manner towards me."

He paused, and Edith made no reply, for in truth she knew not what to say. Mr Penshurst resumed: "Your silence is a tacit acknowledgment that it is so, and I can easily conjecture what has occasioned the change; but, however I may admire and respect the delicacy which prompts it, I cannot but deplore that any thing should have occurred to interrupt the happy intercourse I have hitherto enjoyed with you."

"When you are reconciled to your uncle," said Edith, gently, "the interruption will cease, and every thing will return to its former friendly footing."

"No, that can never be; it is only by mutually understanding each other that confidence can ever be restored. Forgive me, therefore, if I am led to explain myself sooner than I should

otherwise have ventured to do, in avowing that, even had no other obstacle existed, the sentiments I entertain for you would have formed an insuperable bar to my complying with my uncle's wishes."

Edith was not overwhelmed by this declaration, for her heart was untouched by it; but, slightly colouring, after a moment's pause she said, "Gratifying as your preference might be to another, I can only regret that it should have been bestowed upon me. My esteem and friendship are yours, as I trusted yours had been mine; but beyond these I can make no return."

"But you will—suffer me to hope you will—when the obstacles which appear to stand in the way at present are removed, as I pledge myself they shall be in a very short time. My uncle loves me too much, and is too easy in his temper, to hold out against my resolution; and even Mrs Ribley, to do her justice, acts too much upon principle to render her influence dangerous. The provision allotted for me, even in my uncle's lifetime, is amply sufficient to enable me to take that station in society which

my birth and family entitle me to claim. The consent of my uncle, and, if you will, your aunt, once obtained, I flatter myself you will at least allow me to try the effects of time and perseverance in creating an interest for myself in your regards."

"No, Mr Penshurst," said Edith, mournfully but firmly, "I will not for one instant deceive you. I am not insensible to the advantages you offer me—I am not ungrateful for the preference you honour me with; but believe me, I speak a language that never can alter, when I say, I never can be more to you than I am at this moment—your friend and well-wisher. As such, let us part for the present;" and she held out her hand to him, as they now came in sight of Mrs Macauley's cottage.

Mr Penshurst seemed to struggle with his emotions—and mortified pride, no less than wounded feeling, showed itself in his countenance: "At least a few days, or even hours, might have been bestowed upon the consideration of my claims to your regard; and still I would flatter myself, that courtesy alone will

incline you to grant them a more calm and dispassionate consideration than you can possibly do now ;—a week—a month—a year, if you will —I am content to wait your final decision."

Tears rose to Edith's eyes, while she answered—" Believe me, Mr Penshurst, the measure would only be one of protracted pain to both of us; my sentiments cannot now waver; what I say to-day, I should only repeat a year hence. My best wishes are yours—may God bless you !" They had now reached the garden gate, and Mrs Macauley was seen joyfully hastening to meet them.

Again Edith extended her hand to him. He took it in silence, then turned abruptly, and hastened away. Mrs Macauley looked after him for a few minutes, then shook her head with a significant expression, as she regarded Edith: " He's a fine, genteel, weel-faur'd lad," thought she, half aloud, and as if communing with herself, " and many a one would be glad of him, though may be he should not look just so high as Glenroy's dochter."

CHAPTER XIII.

On returning home, Edith found Mr Ribley still vibrating to the sound of "Refused Miss Mogg, and old Mogg in a dropsy!" If Mrs Ribley's suspicions of her nephew's attachment to Edith had been excited, they now appeared to be completely dispelled by a note just received from him, declaring his intention of setting out for the continent in a day or two. This was quite conclusive, in her opinion, that she had been for once mistaken in her surmises, and she therefore took the first opportunity of assuring Edith, that there appeared not the slightest ground for supposing that Mr Penshurst had been at all influenced by any secret preference in refusing to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg. Mr Ribley was too good-natured to retain his displeasure, which, indeed, scarcely ever amount-

ed to anger, however strongly he might express his disappointment; and he therefore hastened to town the following morning, to be reconciled to his somewhat spoiled nephew, before he took his departure. Edith felt the loss she had sustained in an agreeable companion, and the dulness and vacuity that reigned in the family, would have been at times almost too much for her spirit to sustain, had it sought support in outward things. But she had "that within which passeth show," even "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," seeking not its own in the things of this world, for of all those which had once been hers she was now bereft; the tenderest ties of nature and of love had been broken asunder,—her pride of ancestry had been abased,—habits of almost prodigal munificence had been exchanged for the galling yoke of poverty and dependence; even the slight solace of pleasing social intercourse, she had been obliged to surrender. A mere worldly mind would have flown from the contemplation of such disasters,—a superstitious one would have given way to gloom and dejection. But the Christian

sees in all that befalls him, whether it be good, or whether it seem evil, only the manifestations of Divine love, as exercised in training and preparing the soul for its approach to that perfection which it is one day destined to realize. The value of this great and all-important truth daily pressed itself more strongly on Edith's conviction, and cast its hallowed radiance even across the weary path she was destined to tread. In constant communings with her dear friends at Inch Orran, she had always a source of pure, unmingled pleasure, which, with the fond and simple tokens of her dear old Macky's affection, seemed now the only fragments that remained to her of her former happiness; and these she did not sullenly reject, but rather cherished with all the warmth of a still susceptible heart.

So passed the time,—the only varieties, such as were afforded by dull village parties, and occasional airings in the environs with Mr and Mrs Ribley, from which she sought to extract such amusement as could be afforded by the objects that met their view. Amongst the many closely-embowered villas which lay on every

side, there chanced to be one which more particularly attracted Edith's attention, from the beautiful disposition of the grounds, and the glimpse she caught of the house through the rich and varied foliage, which formed a leafy screen all around, as if, in the true spirit of English seclusion, to hide the home beauties of the scene from the vulgar eyes profane of the passer-by. She enquired of Mr Ribley to whom it belonged.

" Sure ! don't you know? Why, that is Woodlands !—belongs to your relation, Lady Waldegrave—sweet, pretty place, and such a fine house !—never lives there, though; suppose you were to get an order from her ladyship to go and see it; and we'll make a party, and ask the Claridges, and the Mudges, and Mr and Mrs Botkins, and Miss Mogg, and a few friends, and have a pic-nic in the pleasure-grounds. Sure, Kitty, my dear, that would be very pleasant?"

" And this," thought Edith, as she gazed upon it with mournful feelings, undefinable to herself—" This is one of Florinda's many fair,

but neglected homes!" The contrast of her own situation, homeless and dependent, swelled her heart with new and painful emotions; but such feelings were alien to her noble, generous nature, and were quickly dispelled by better thoughts. She shook away the tear which had risen to her eye, and looked serenely on the lovely, though deserted spot. "And be it so," said she, mentally; "all are the gifts of God—and, oh! may He grant that, wherever her home is, it may be a virtuous and a happy one!"

Mr Ribley continued to talk of the projected pic-nic till they returned home; and Edith had some difficulty in evading his request, that she would make immediate application for an order to carry it into effect. But he seemed likely to be gratified sooner than he expected, for, on reaching home, she found the following note, which had been delivered in her absence:—

"My dear Edith,

"I have just heard from mamma you are in town, and wish for a card to my ball. I have the

greatest pleasure in sending you one, and assure you I shall be quite delighted to see you there. I wish very much I could see you before then, in a quiet, comfortable way; but, unfortunately, I have not a single day that is not crowded with engagements; but I trust by and by we shall have some pleasant meetings, as mamma tells me you are going to live with some relations at Woodly Common, which is in the neighbourhood of Woodlands, and I shall probably be there for a month or two, this summer. In the mean time, I am going to send my little boy there for change of air, after the hooping-cough. I have such perfect confidence in the people who are about him, that I know he will be quite as safe as under my own eye, and I shall make a point of seeing him as often as I possibly can. But I should think it very kind, dearest Edith, if you would go and see him occasionally; it would really be the greatest possible comfort to me, and do tell him some little stories—for he quite doats upon stories. It almost breaks my heart to part with him, even at so short a distance! Tell me, if you don't think him an

angel?—Adieu, dearest, dear Edith. I do hope you will come to my ball. And believe me, ever and ever, your affectionate friend and sister,

"FLORINDA WALDEGRAVE.

"Waldegrave House, Sunday."

P.S.—"If you do think of my ball, as I hope you will, pray consult my milliner, Madame Duval. She *is* ruinous, but her taste is perfection. And, for Heaven's sake, beware of mamma's friend and counsellor, Madame la Roque! I enclose a general order for your admittance to Woodlands, but I must be very exclusive against admitting the village folks, while Dudley remains there."

A momentary flush burned on Edith's cheek at the heartless, unfeeling impertinence of this billet; but it passed quickly away, and was followed by a sigh of regret at the thought, how ill its selfish, unfeeling levity augured for herself and others. One thing particularly struck her, —was it delicacy or indifference that withheld her from once mentioning her husband's name?

It could scarcely be the former; for of true delicacy of mind Lady Waldegrave had shown herself hitherto incapable; and Edith shuddered to think it could be the latter: she attached so little credit to Lady Elizabeth's testimony, that her insinuations had produced no effect upon her mind. But this equivocal silence seemed but too much in accordance with them. Should it be so, she thought, how little are her outward circumstances to be envied! Edith knew not yet half the selfish egotism of a fine lady. It cost her a struggle to write a reply to the note. Her worldly feelings shrunk from the task; but her better and more Christian principles prevailed.

CHAPTER XIV.

It may be supposed that Mrs Macauley's artlessness, and, indeed, ignorant good-nature, exposed her, in no common degree, to the various arts of deception as practised in civilized communities, and which are commonly found to keep pace with the increasing refinement and luxury of society. While in London, she was a prey to every species of petty imposture with which its streets abound; at least as far as her limited means admitted. Her large pockets were daily replenished with half-pence for the beggars—her room was filled with trash bought as bargains from the worthless hawkers who beset the passengers; all which, to her surprise and mortification, turned to nought in her hands; and the authority of the wise Johnnie himself, had been scarcely sufficient to restrain her from turning

his house, small as it was, into a house of refuge for persons of no doubtful character. Her zeal was good, but it lacked knowledge. Even in her rambles on the Common, or its more secluded paths, few days passed without her meeting with some extraordinary claim upon her wonder, admiration, sympathy, or charity. Edith was therefore too much accustomed to interesting stories, and had seen too many proofs of the fallacy of her good friend's judgment, to feel any very lively interest in the objects of her generous but mistaken ardour. She was, therefore, but little moved when Mrs Macauley entered her room one morning at a very early hour, and with even more than her wonted animation and intelligence beaming on her face—"I daresay you will wonder to see me so early, my dear," said she, seating herself, almost out of breath; "but 'deed I could not wait for your coming to me, for I have scarcely been able to sleep, for thinking of what I met with last night."

"Dear Macky! that is too serious, if your adventures are to rob you of your rest as well as of your money," said Edith.

"O, not a bit I grudge my sleep any more than the pickle siller, when I have it to give; but it was my own fault that I did not sleep any last night; but I could not get him out of my head, do as I would."

"I hope you have not taken this same unknown into your heart, for, large as that is, I think it can scarcely be capacious enough to contain all that you are inclined to open it to; besides, dear Macky," added she, smiling, "you must own I should sometimes find myself in such strange company!"

"Well, well, but you need not be feared this time, my dear, for I'll let nobody dwell there that is any ways disagreeable to you; but I'm as sure as I'm alive, you would not object to him if you but saw him. However, I'm not going to say black or white about him, for I know very well that you rather misdoubt me now; to be sure I have been sometimes mistaken as well as my neighbours, and I'll not say but what I have been a little unfortunate in my good opinions; but for all that, I have my senses still, for which I am very thankful, even though

I maybe do not turn them to so much good as some better and wiser people might do."

For the first time in her life, Mrs Macauley spoke to Glenroy's daughter in a tone slightly indicative of pique.

"Dearest Macky, forgive me," cried Edith, embracing her, "and do not look so grave, if you would not have me dislike your new friend for having caused me to offend my own old and valued one."

"My darling, it's not in the power of Glenroy's dochter to offend me; and the creature's not living that I would put into comparison with you for your own sake. I'm only a wee vexed that I cannot get you to believe—that is, to understand—or—or to comprehend; but 'deed I do not know that I do it right myself."

"No matter," said Edith, smiling, "only tell me what it is you wish me to know, and I will do my best to comprehend it; but now, let us set out upon our ramble this lovely morning." And, taking her old friend's arm within hers, Edith and she set out most lovingly to enjoy

the pure air and balmy fragrance of a delightful summer morning.

"Well, then, my dear, this is what I was going to tell you. You know what a sweet evening it was when we parted last night; so after I had got to my own door, I thought I would just go and ask after that poor ne'er-do-weel creature that I told you about. I went to his mother's, and I got very little satisfaction, but that cannot be helped; so as I was coming home by the t'other side of the Common, which, you know, is very wild and lonesome, especially at night, 'deed I began to think whether I was not rather foolhardy to be walking there by myself at that time; then I thought of how many stories of robberies and murders I had heard, upon people no better or richer than myself, and what ugly pits and places there were among the whins; no doubt it was very foolish in me to be thinking of such things in such a place, and no creature near me. Well, what do you think, but at that very moment I saw a person on a fine tall horse coming riding straight up as it were,

to me—then if I was not frichtened! and my heart began to beat like any thing. However, I thought I would put the best face I could upon it, and not let on that I thought any mischief of him—so, I pretended as if I had been just looking at the bonny young moon; but I cast the tail of my ee at him for all that, and I tried to sing—but 'deed my voice was not very steady—Well, just at that moment he rode close up to me, and what does he do but jump off his horse, and grip both my hands in his!—Oh! I really thought I was as good as robbed and murdered, and I gave such a skreegh!—With that he let me go, but he looked me in the face, and then I saw the tears in his eyes—so I took heart at that—and says I, 'Sir, oh, I'm but a very poor person, but you shall be welcome to all that I have in my pocket, if you will please to do me no harm.' Still he did not speak, but he stood as if he had not heard me, and I saw his lip quiver, and his heart heave as if he was in distress; so then I got more courage, and thinks I, this is a poor young creature that has maybe an old mother, or a sick wife,

or some starving children, that's driven him out to do this—so I took more heart, and said, 'I see, sir, you have not been used to this sinful life, and I hope you never will. I have nothing but a poor sixpence, a few bawbees, and a silver thimble in my pocket, (I quite forgot that I had my watch at my side,) which, if they can do you any good, are at your service, and an old woman's blessing into the bargain.' Well, even wi' the tear in his ee, he gave such a sweet smile, I cannot forget it, and then he said, 'I beg your pardon for the alarm I have occasioned you, and for the liberty I took with you—but I am not what you suppose—I am no robber.'

"'Deed then, you do not look like one,' says I, 'and I hope for the sake of the mother that bore you, as well as for your own, you never will be one; but if you only wanted to frichten me, I do not think it was very well done of you.'

"'No—no,' said he, quite earnestly, 'that was far from my intention. I took you for an old friend—one who is associated in my mind with all that is dear to me;' and then he stopped

—and I saw him just gulping down his very thoughts as it were—and then he said, 'Can you, will you, forgive me?'

"'Deed that I will, with all my heart,' says I, 'and I think all the better of you too for the fricht you gave me, now that I know the reason of it.'

"'Well then,' says he, 'to show that you no longer mistrust me, you must allow me to see you safe home;' and before I knew where I was, there we were walking arm in arm, chatting to one another, as if we had been friends all our days. Now is not that very surprising?"

"Why, it would certainly be something of an adventure with any body but you; but I think I have heard you relate still more marvellous incidents in your life," said Edith.

"But wait till you hear the end of it, my dear. Well, we went on this way, him leading his horse with one hand, and me hanging on his t'other arm, and he told all how it was he happened to give me such a fright—that he had been dining with a friend in this neighbourhood, and was riding back to town, but lost his way, or at

least was not sure about it, and so when he saw me coming, he thought he would just ride up to me, and ask me to direct him; and then the moment he set his eyes upon me, as I told you before, he was so struck with my likeness to an old friend, that he had not seen from the time he was a boy, that, as he said, he quite forgot himself—Now was not that very naatral?"

In the true Scotch style, to answer one question with another—"Have you still got your watch?" enquired Edith, with a smile. Mrs Macauley reddened.

"O, not a bit of that question is like yourself now; 'deed, and I wish that your heart, that was so innocent and unsuspicious, may not be getting corrupted, and like the rest of the world, just with dwelling amongst such unclean creatures! My watch! 'deed, then, he was far more like to give me a watch, if I had wanted such a thing, than to have taken it from me! Oh, my darling, beware of hasty judgments—they ill become us, poor, ignorant, sinful creatures that we are."

"Forgive me, dearest Macky, but you know

it is but a minute since you introduced your hero to me as a highwayman."

"But did not I tell you, my dear, that was nothing but a foolish fancy of my own? and one I've thought much shame of ever since; for if I had not been quite stupified with my own senseless fricht, I never could have seen his face and thought ill could come of it."

"Yet, 'tis but a few days since you declared you would never trust to appearances again, after the——"

"Well, well, my dear, but that was quite a different thing; and no doubt there are many fair faces that hide foul hearts, just as there are many worthy, respectable, ill-faured people. My own good Mr Macauley, many people thought, was not very pretty, because of his being pock-marked; but he was very fair to my sight, for there's no face like the face that loves us."

"You say true," said Edith, with a sigh, as she thought how few were the faces that now looked on her with love and gladness.

"Well, then, my dear, is not that one good reason for my being so well pleased with this young

gentleman that I was telling you about? Not a bit, but he says he is so fond of my face, for it puts him so much in mind of an old friend's—and, 'deed, he looked at me with such sweet earnest eyes, I could not but believe him."

"And so you gave him your last guinea," said Edith, with a smile.

"O, my dear, but it grieves me to think you should be grown so uncharitable in your words, when I'm sure it is not in your nature—'deed, I could almost find in my heart not to tell you any more."

"Ah, pray let me hear the conclusion of your tale, or romance, or whatever it may be. Dear Macky, I am only sorry that so much goodness should so often meet such bad returns."

"But you need not vex yourself about that this time, my dear, for there's nothing of the kind that will be likely to happen, as you shall hear. 'Well,' says I, 'it's very surprising that it seems to me as if I had known you too somewhere, but I cannot for the life of me say where.' 'Perhaps,' says he, 'in some former state of existence, and therefore let us look upon this as the

renewal of old friendship, which is a much better thing than the beginning of a new one—Don't you think so?'—' 'Deed, and I do,' says I, ' though I am not altogether sure about a former state, as we have no authority for it; but maybe I have seen you at Glenroy Castle, for I used to see so many grand and genteel people there, that I cannot remember either the faces or the names of one-half of them.' But just then he stopped to sort the bridle of his horse, and did not attend to what I was saying. So, after he had put it to rights, he said, ' I beg your pardon—*to* whom does Glenroy Castle belong?' So I told him how it had belonged to your family for generations, and how it had pleased Providence to put it past your good papa's family—and then my heart was full—and so I told him more maybe than I should have done—and so we went on cracking together till we came to the door of my cottage—then I was going to wish him a good night, when he looked about him, and said, ' What a sweet little dwelling you have got here—how I wish I could find just such another in this neigh-

bourhood, for I want lodgings in the country.' So I told him it was not my own, but belonged to a very decent couple, who let part of it for lodgings, and that I knew they had two rooms at the t'other end of it to let. Well, just as I was speaking, out came Mrs Smith herself; and so the short and the long of it is, that he took her lodgings for three months, and is to enter upon them to-morrow. Now what do you think of that, my dear? Is that like a robber, think you?"

This went so far beyond Edith's worst anticipations, that she actually turned pale with fear, as she thought of the evil consequences that might ensue to her poor old friend from having got thus involved (as she had no doubt) with some artful swindler; and she exclaimed, "How could Mrs Smith be so imprudent as to take an utter stranger into her house?"

"O, 'deed Mrs Smith's but a narrow-minded suspicious body; for she hummed and hawed, and spoke about references and securities; but I said she need not mind that, for I would be answerable for him."

"O, Macky, this is really too much!" cried Edith, shocked at the imprudence of her good old guardian.

"Well, my dear, but you should wait till you hear me out. So then Mrs Smith said, that was sufficient.—'So then, says I, if you please, I would take the liberty to ask your name. My own name is Macauley, now in my seventieth year.' Well at that his face was overcast, and he hung his head for a minute or two with a very mournful look—and I saw his colour come and go—and 'deed I was beginning to feel not quite so satisfied, when he lifted up his head, and looked at me with his full, clear, blue eyes.—But when I saw his fine open face, I wondered at myself for my misgiving—and then he said, 'I am called Melcombe.' Well, then, I thought very naturally that he meant Malcolm; (for you know the English have such a way of clipping every thing away to nothing)—so I could not but cry out, what a wonderful thing that was, for that surely he must be some relation of the family, though he did not know it. But he sighed and said, 'The names were different;'

and then (what I thought was very well-bred) he said, ' He would be very glad to change the one name for the other.' And was that like a robber, think you ?"

Edith saw it was in vain to attempt to open the eyes of Mrs Macauley's understanding as to the dangerous predicament she had brought herself into, by introducing a person of so suspicious a character to the family with whom she lodged, and making herself responsible for his conduct. This was the very climax of her Quixotism ! Edith now felt the want of some friend and counsellor to whom she could apply for advice ; for dauntless as is the heart of woman on great and heroic occasions—still, in the coarser occurrences of this working-day world, she is ill qualified by nature or education for taking a part ; for truly has it been said, " Women are hopelessly and incurably unfitted for business."

Edith experienced this, as she vainly tried to devise some means for extricating her old friend from this dilemma ; but she could do nothing herself, and there was no one to whom she could apply. She would not expose her to

the Ribleys, for they were quite incapable of appreciating the excellence of her character, and comprehending the simplicity and purity of her motives and actions, and she shrunk from the thoughts of subjecting either herself or her poor Macky to the cold inquisitorial scrutiny of Mrs Ribley, or the senseless loquacious tattle of her husband. The only scheme that presented itself, was to try to persuade Mrs Macauley to write to her nephew, the wise Johnnie, acquainting him with what had passed, and requesting of him to endeavour to find out what description of person it was, she had now involved herself with. Should that fail, she could only wait with patience the result of this strange suspicious adventure.

CHAPTER XV.

Accordingly, the following morning, Edith set forth as usual for the cottage, and found the ever active Macky chanting away to herself,—

> "What beauties does Flora disclose,
> How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed,"—

as she was diligently culling a nosegay of the sweetest and the fairest for her beloved *élève*, while her Bible and her stocking lay near her on a rustic seat, canopied with honeysuckles. After the first affectionate salutations and tender enquiries were made on both sides, and Edith, as was her custom, had read to her old friend a portion of that book whose words were as balm to them both, she began to suggest her scheme with as much delicacy and finesse as possible;

but she had not proceeded far before she was interrupted.

"I beg your pardon, my dear, for interrupting you, which I know is not good breeding; but I see very well how it is—you are vexing yourself with the thought that maybe I will be put in prison for having been caution for that young man, Mr Melcombe—am I not right?"

"Not quite so bad as that, dear Macky," said Edith; "your friends would never allow that to come to pass, I am sure."

"Well, whatever it is, you may make yourself easy, for I can tell you he has paid the price of his lodgings in advance for three months before he entered upon them; for he said he could not expect them to take the word of a stranger, and neither would he take advantage of my generous confidence in him (or something like that;) now, I do not think that is very like a robber!—Oh, my dear, should not this be a lesson to us to beware of forming such rash and hasty judgments of one another?"

Edith smiled to hear Mrs Macauley's application of the terms rash and hasty, but she was

in part relieved to find she was free from the responsibility she had so thoughtlessly incurred. Still she had some vague misgivings as to the character of the person with whom she had formed this sudden and somewhat suspicious intimacy. With all Mrs Macauley's excellencies, she certainly was not a person to captivate a young man at first sight. Neither could a stranger, who was ignorant of the qualities of her heart, be supposed to enter into the peculiarities of her manners, and the simplicity of her conversation. Even allowing that her resemblance to an old friend had first attracted his notice, yet that resemblance must soon have disappeared on a more intimate recognition; for it was scarcely possible there could be two Mrs Macauleys in the world.—Yet why, after all, should I be so uncharitable in my suspicions? she thought; this poor stranger, whom I am so harshly condemning, may, like myself, be almost alone in the world; and his heart may have yearned, as my own would have done, towards even the fancied resemblance of one known and beloved in happier days.—While thoughts like these

were passing through her mind, Mrs Macauley was doing the best she could to aid the more favourable change that was taking place in Edith's sentiments.

"O, if you were to see him, my dear, I'm sure you would almost think shame of yourself for ever having evened him to any thing that was bad! But maybe you'll not see him at all; for he says he wishes to live very retired, though he has some friends in the neighbourhood. I told him that I thought it would be very dull for him to live here without he had some other company than me; for that 'deed my best days were fled, and I was not so merry as I had been."

"'No more am I,' says he, with a sigh, 'so we shall suit very well in that respect; and when I am here I do not desire any better company than your own.'"

Again Edith's suspicions returned.—"And does he assign no reason for the love of retirement, beyond that of enjoying the pleasure of your company?"

"Not yet; but I dare say he will tell me all about himself by and by; consider, my dear,

how very short a time it is since we have been acquainted."

"I do, dear Macky; and therefore I cannot but wonder that your friendship should have made such rapid progress in so short a time."

"There's no accounting for these things, my dear," replied her friend, gravely; "and we ought to be very thankful when a blessing comes in our way, and not be too curious in examining into it, and taking it to pieces to see what's in it, just like the children with their toys. Oh, if we had but the spirit of truth and thankfulness, how many a pearl we might find in our daily paths, that now in our pride and unbelief we trample under our feet! But with regard to this young gentleman, his health is maybe one reason that he wishes to be quiet; for when I saw him in daylight yesterday, he looked very pale, and he told me that he was but just recovering from an illness, so he would need somebody to take care of him, for he looks like one that could not take care of himself."

"Well, dear Macky, I shall rejoice if you have found a real acquisition in your new friend;

one who will cheer you in the many lonely hours you must pass while I am engaged with my aunt."

"Speaking of that, my dear, I really think it would maybe be just as well to say nothing about this to Mr and Mrs Ribley for a little while, just till I know all about Mr Melcombe, which I have no doubt will be very soon; for though they are very good people, and very discreet to me, yet I think they are not just so—so——"

"So credulous as you are, dear Macky," said Edith, laughing, as she embraced her in taking leave; "well, I shall keep your secret for you in the mean time, but don't tax my forbearance too long."

Several days passed, and still no new disclosure was made, though Mrs Macauley's infatuation for her new friend seemed daily to increase, in spite of the reserve he maintained.

"I don't know how it is," said she, with a perplexed air, one day, in answer to Edith's renewed remonstrances; "for he is any thing but reserved—quite the contrary—for he tells me a great deal that I never knew before; and

he takes pleasure, too, in hearing me tell him all that I know—which, to be sure, is not much. But whenever I speak to him of his family, the cloud comes over his open brow, and he changes the subject; so I'm thinking they may be no great things, any of them; and it would be very ill done in me to distress him, by seeking to pry into his private affairs."

Edith again felt how vain was reason or argument, when opposed to prejudice or partiality, and wisely forebore to press the matter farther. She resolved, however, to watch over the interests of her old friend as zealously as she could, and upon no account to suffer herself to be led into an acquaintance with one whom she could not yet consider as any thing but a mere adventurer. She had little doubt but that Mrs Macauley, in the simplicity of her heart, had acquainted him with her suspicions; and, either from delicacy, or conscious deception, he seemed to be equally bent upon keeping his distance. Although his apartments had a separate entrance at the other end of the cottage, yet the window of his sitting-room opened upon the garden;

and, from the smallness of the cottage and its boundaries, Edith was convinced he must often be near them. It therefore required no common care in one of its inmates, to preserve such strict seclusion. Mrs Macauley, indeed, represented him as much occupied in study of some kind or another, and that the only relaxations he allowed himself were a ride on horseback, and a friendly chat with her. But, with all these friendly chats, however, there came not that confidential communication which his friend daily looked for ; but still she kept a stout heart even against "hope deferred."

CHAPTER XVI.

Edith went to visit Lady Waldegrave's child; and though she looked upon him with interest, it was interest free from all emotion—proof sufficient, had any been required, that the dreams of her early love had completely died away, never more to return. The boy was, indeed, a paragon of childish loveliness; and already the delicate, yet majestic contour of his head and features, and the grace and elegance of his air and movements, indicated the child of high descent. Youth, beauty, and sweetness combined, are sure to win their way to every heart, and Edith soon gained the good graces of her little relative—at least, as much as any one can ever gain upon the love of a very indulged and pampered child. He testified great repugnance towards Mr and Mrs Ribley, whose awkward

overtures he rejected with disdain. From whatever cause he might suffer, it certainly, to all appearance, could not be from neglect, as he was most zealously attended by a French *Bonne*, his Italian nurse, and German footman, all of whom seemed sedulous to please and amuse the little idol committed to their charge. The Ribleys were too fond of seeing sights, not to avail themselves of this opportunity of seeing all that was to be seen; and Edith, ever willing to gratify others, even at the expense of her own feelings, accepted the offer of viewing the house and grounds, and thus allowed herself to be associated with them in all the little, mean, prying ways, in which vulgar people delight to go about a great house. There was much to admire: The house, of the purest style of Italian architecture, stood on a gentle eminence; the velvet lawn was studded with beds of the richest and rarest flowers and shrubs, while trees of stately growth were scattered here and there, till the ground gradually sloped to the noble river which formed its boundary. All that taste and wealth could do to embellish nature, had been bestow-

ed on this, as it seemed, cherished, though now deserted abode.

The interior of the house would have required taste more cultivated and refined than those of the Ribleys to appreciate. The entrance-hall was filled with noble specimens of sculpture, the apartments were adorned with some of the finest works of the Italian masters; and in one, appropriated entirely to the works of modern artists, there were placed two of the happiest efforts of Sir Thomas's pencil, in full lengths of Sir Reginald and Lady Waldegrave. It was but a momentary throb of surprise with Edith when she came suddenly and unexpectedly upon the all but breathing form of her faithless lover—and when it passed away, she stood, and looked calmly, though sadly upon it, as upon the face of one who had injured her, but with whom she was now at peace. The servant pointed to a door which conducted, he said, to Lady Waldegrave's private apartments, but her ladyship had given positive orders that they should upon no account be shown until they were put in order, for a first-rate artist and his people were employed in un-

packing the various articles purchased by Sir Reginald and her ladyship when abroad.

Mr Ribley's curiosity, in the true spirit of Cockneyism, became very importunate on hearing of the locked-up apartments; he seemed to think nothing of what he had seen, in comparison of what he had not seen, and he lingered behind, and even peeped through the key-hole, in hopes of spying something to make a wonder of, but in vain—he could make nothing of it; and he was fain to return home, exclaiming, ever and anon, "Well, to be sure! what can be in these apartments?—should just like to know—can't guess—Can you, Kitty, my dear?" For some days, Mr Ribley could talk of nothing but what he had *not* seen. Soon after her visit, Edith received the following billet from Lady Waldegrave:

"DEAREST DEAR EDITH,

"I AM so much obliged to you for going to see my darling Dudley—it was quite a comfort to me to hear you had been at Woodlands. And I hope they showed you every thing, and gave

you fruit and flowers? I have a letter every day from Mademoiselle Le Clerc, with a bulletin of my sweetest boy; but still I shall be glad if you will continue to visit him now and then. There is another thing, my dear Edith, which I must beg your good offices in, and I shall not teaze you with apologies, as I know you too well to doubt your readiness to oblige. You must know that mamma has taken it into her head that she requires change of air, which indeed is very probable, as the weather is now so very hot. I wish her of all things to go to the sea-side, or at any rate, to some distance from town. I have even offered her Waldegrave Abbey for the summer, as we shall not go there till very late in the season, but she persists in wishing to take possession of Woodlands, which would be the most inconvenient thing in the world for me, as it is all in confusion at present with my *foreign gear*, and I cannot have it put to rights till I am on the spot myself; and to get any thing done as it ought to be done while mamma is in the house, you must be aware, would be quite impossible; besides there is not accommodation for us

both. Now, what I wish you to do, dear Edith, is to take the trouble to find a furnished house, which you think would be suitable for her, as near to where you are as possible. She is really fond of you; and as she is of course in the best society, it would also be an advantage to you to be with her. Now, I do hope you will be able to gratify me in this, and the sooner you can accomplish it the better. You would see by the papers how *illustrious* and *renowned* Sir Reginald has become upon the turf!

"Adieu, my dear,

"Believe me ever, your affectionate,

"F. WALDEGRAVE.

"Mamma does not require a large house, you know, only don't let it be vulgar—and citish."

This commission, it may be supposed, was not of a nature for Edith to undertake, and she wrote Lady Waldegrave briefly and coldly, declining to execute the ungracious office.

In a few days, however, she received a billet from Lady Elizabeth, apprising her of her arri-

val in the neighbourhood in a very indifferent state of health, and requesting to see her immediately, as she had much to communicate. As her ladyship's carriage accompanied the summons, Edith had no excuse to offer for not complying with it; and she accordingly set off, charged by Mr Ribley to endeavour to find out what sort of things were in the locked-up rooms at Woodlands, and when he was likely to get a sight of them.

She found Lady Elizabeth in a charming cottage *ornée*, within a beautiful park; but the inmate of this little Elysium formed a sad contrast to the loveliness that bloomed around. She looked haggard and worn out, and was in one of her most peevish and irritable moods of mind. The day was sultry, yet she reclined, with her dogs and parrots around her, by the side of a blazing fire, with curtains, as usual, almost close drawn.

"You find me excessively unwell, my dear," said she, in answer to Edith's enquiries; "and I impute much of my illness to the treatment I have received from that shocking man, your

cousin, and from my own daughter—But pray ring the bell; this is the time when my dogs ought to have their walk.—Go, darlings, go. Pray, Dawson, be careful of them, and carry Amor when he appears fatigued.—There now, my sweets," kissing each severally as she dismissed them, to Edith's great relief. "Yes, I have been excessively ill used, which, together with the injudicious treatment of that wretch Belloni, has almost killed me. Thank heaven, I got rid of him, and I have got the best and most skilful man possible, Monsieur Lamotte—quite a treasure!—But the cruelty and ingratitude I have experienced—I—I——Do ring quickly, for I must have my drops!—it makes me quite ill to think of it!—I am so faint!"

Monsieur Lamotte obeyed the summons. He was a grimacing, high-dressed, under-bred Frenchman; but he knew his cue, and having cajoled his patient, and administered some drops, he was then allowed to depart; and her ladyship was returning to the subject, when Edith besought her to refrain from it, since it was one which agitated her so much. But, like all weak

people, she liked the excitement of her own paltry feelings, and went on.

"It is but too apparent that I have been very unwell; however, it was merely a sort of nervous attack, that any body might have, and which Lamotte assures me will entirely pass away, and that in a few weeks I shall be quite myself again. But I found it impossible to be quiet in town,—when one is so much *recherchée* that is out of the question,—so, by the advice of the medical people, and indeed at Florinda's earnest entreaty, I resolved to try the effect of change of air, and proposed to go to Woodlands for a few weeks. Besides liking the place itself, I was sure it would amuse me to superintend the arrangements making there—the pictures, marbles, and all sorts of pretty things that my daughter purchased abroad; and, in short, I told Florinda I should wish to go to her house for a short time. Only conceive her telling me that was impossible, for that Sir Reginald and she were going themselves very soon, and had invited more people than the house could hold, to celebrate their child's birth-day! You may believe

how excessively angry I was, and we had quite a *scène*. But she cried, poor dear, and said how it distressed her to refuse me, but that, in short, she dared not disobey her husband. 'And so, because you have a bad husband, you must be an undutiful daughter!' said I; and I told her that she ought not to pay the least regard to the wishes of such a person;—that she had done him already too much honour by marrying him—and I even hinted that, rather than submit to such tyranny, she ought to separate from him."

Edith was shocked at this new proof of Florinda's duplicity, in throwing the blame of her own selfish and undutiful behaviour on her husband, and thus setting at variance those she ought to have been most desirous of uniting in affection. She, therefore, strove by every means to soften the injury, and soothe the irritated feelings of the despised, yet still doting parent; and there are few natures that are not benefited, in some degree, by the bland voice of sympathy. Lady Elizabeth's manner became less feverish and irascible as she proceeded—"Yes, it is all very well, as it has turned out. This is a pretty

tiny cottage, and my dogs are quite safe in the park, no thanks to my daughter—though, poor dear, it was no fault of hers either; but my good cousin, Lady Arabella Conway, happened to call at the very time when Florinda and I were both a little agitated with what had passed, and so I told her exactly how it was; and she—the best creature in the world—next day sent to offer me this cottage, which had been built by Admiral Conway for his mother,—and, in short, *me voici;* and though I am not particularly fond of a cottage, yet it suits me, with my very limited income, to have a house without paying for it." Thus she run on, till the return of her dogs from their walk, when Edith would fain have left her to the pleasures of their society; but her step-mother was not willing to part with her so easily, for even she could feel, though she could not properly appreciate, the harmonizing influence of Edith's presence—that gentle forbearance, and total absence of all selfish egotism, which are charms in themselves of no negative description. On her part, Edith compassionated the mother, such as she was, thus disregarded

and cast off by her own, her only child. Weak and frivolous as she was, she trusted her mind might yet be turned to better things; and that bad health and disappointment might lead her, as they had done many others, to relinquish those vanities which only served to mock and cheat her hopes. With these benevolent views, Edith consented to pass a week or two with her step-mother, provided Mrs Ribley would give up her prior claims upon her; and having promised, at all events, to see her as often as she could, she at length departed.

In her way home she stopped at Mrs Macauley's humble abode, and, upon entering her little parlour, found that worthy, with a face of deep deliberation, musing upon the contents of a letter she held in her hand. The letter was from the wise Johnnie, and the purport of it was to this effect—that Mrs J. Macauley and he would take it very kind if their good aunt would return to them as soon as possible, Archie having just been sent home from school with the modified smallpox—the baby having got St Anthony's fire—they had had to turn off the nursery-maid, &c.

&c. &c.; the whole concluding with a request, that his good aunt would remain till after Mrs Macauley's confinement.

"This is certainly not an alluring invitation, dear Macky," said Edith, as she finished reading the letter.

"O, my dear, as to that I do not mind, or rather I ought to be very thankful that, in my seventieth year, I can be of any use in the world, when many a one is just a burden and a reproach; but what vexes me is the thoughts of leaving you." Here the tears rose to her eyes as she gazed fondly on her darling *élève*.

"And I shall miss you, my own dear, kind friend," said Edith, equally affected; "but that is not what is to be considered. At your age, it is really too much to call upon you to encounter so much fatigue, and anxiety, and discomfort."

"My dear, at no age are we ever unable to serve God in some shape or other—that is our destiny from beginning to end; and how can I serve God so well as by serving his children and my fellow-creatures? and maybe I did not think of serving Him so much as I should have done

in my younger days, and I ought to be very grateful in being permitted to do it in my old age; so I will just put my foot in one of the coaches to-morrow morning."

Edith knew the generous devotedness of the good old woman too well to attempt to turn her from the path of her duty. The claims of Glenroy's daughter only, would she have considered superior to those of Mr Macauley's nephew; but as she did not stand in need of her services at that time, the claims of Johnnie Macauley were paramount to all others. Those only who love the country as much as Mrs Macauley did, can fully appreciate the sacrifice she made in quitting her sweet rural dwelling, with its flowers, and birds, and busy bees, for the crowded city, the noise of a small inconvenient house, and the strife of sickly, unruly children.

"Another thing I am really sorry for," said she to Edith, "besides parting from you, is the leaving that fine interesting young man Mr Melcombe, without getting his history, which I have no doubt I would have done, if we had been to stay much longer together; and then I

would have liked so well to have made you acquainted with each other! I'm as sure as I'm alive, you would have come to be very fond of one another, for I think there's a something, I cannot tell what—a sort of resemblance, as it were, in your ways of thinking, for he is every bit as good as you, my dear—in his sentiments I mean. As to one another's hearts, you know we cannot tell what's in them." And with many a tender embrace, hopes of meeting soon, and promises of writing often, Edith took leave of her dear old friend, who was to set off betimes the following morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM this time scarcely a day passed in which Lady Elizabeth did not either come in person, or send her carriage with an invitation amounting to a demand on Edith, till at length nothing could satisfy her but that she should take up her residence with her entirely for a few weeks. Edith would fain have excused herself; not that it was worse to be with her than with the Ribleys, but that she shrank from the thought of being brought into intercourse with Sir Reginald and Lady Waldegrave, as she doubtless would be, if an inmate of her stepmother's family. But Lady Elizabeth disliked contradiction too much ever to submit to it when she could help it, and, bent upon carrying her point, she made a direct appeal to Mrs Ribley, who, flattered by this condescension, at once decided upon the propriety

of Edith's accepting her ladyship's invitation. It also happened to suit her own plans particularly well, as Mr Ribley and she were meditating their annual trip to Cheltenham with their good friend Mrs Rose Popkin, who, for the last fifteen years, had been their travelling companion. And as Edith could not be taken with comfort to them, nor left with propriety by herself, this mode of disposing of her was the very thing that seemed to suit all parties. Accordingly, Edith had to acquiesce with the best grace she could to take up her abode for the present at Oak Cottage.

In one respect Edith was benefited by the change. Although the great proportion of Lady Elizabeth's visitors probably did not rank much higher in the moral and intellectual scale than Mrs Ribley's, still their manners were more elegant, and their conversation more refined. As intelligent beings, or rational companions, they were perhaps no better; but as mere passing acquaintances, they were certainly superior. Pre-eminent amongst them, were the kind owners of her little demesne—Admiral and Lady Arabella

Conway: the former a still handsome, though somewhat disabled-looking man, with open countenance, fine bald head, frank, bluff manners, and a sort of hasty, peremptory good nature. Descended from noble ancestry, Lady Arabella inherited the dignity without the pride of birth, and possessed that inherent nobility of mind, which sheds its own native lustre upon the adventitious gifts of fortune. She was nearly related to Lady Elizabeth—they had spent much of their childhood and youth together, and her goodness of heart led her still to feel an affection, and take an interest even in the vapid, frivolous being, with whom there existed no other affinity. Edith had been charmed with the unaffected sweetness, and dignified simplicity, of Lady Arabella's manners, and expressed the prepossession she felt towards her to Lady Elizabeth.

"Yes, my cousin *is* a very good woman, though *un peu dévote.* You know, I suppose, that she was a daughter of the Duke of Derrington's, and you may still see she has been handsome; but she and I made our *début* together, and somehow I—in short, Lady Arabella,

though the best creature in the world, produced no sensation whatever, while I"—Here her ladyship gave one of her little haggard smiles, and Edith smiled too, as she contrasted the natural dignity, and charming, serene countenance of Lady Arabella, with the withered, shrivelled goblin at her side;—"however, she might have made *un bon parti*, it was said; but she chose to make a love match, and married the Honourable Captain, now Admiral Conway. However, after all, it has turned out well; he has got a handsome fortune somehow, and she has been excessively lucky in disposing of her family: her daughters are both greatly married, one to Lord Ellersly, eldest son of the Duke of Tadcaster—the other to Lord Beechley. Her sons have also made great alliances, and are in very good situations; so that she may have a great deal of power and patronage if she chooses. The Admiral has a charming house in this neighbourhood, where we shall go some day when I feel quite able; but he is become very lame, and rather deaf, and it quite kills me to raise my voice; indeed Dr Lamotte is of opinion, that

my complaints are of an incipient pulmonary nature, and recommends my going abroad before winter, which I shall certainly do, otherwise my voice will be completely ruined. Dr Price allowed me to exert myself a great deal too much; and I ought not to have been permitted to see your poor, dear father when I was last in Scotland; in fact I lost three notes by being obliged to raise my voice to him—if Dr Price had not been a fool, he never would have allowed it. Then, you know, I had that odious German! who drank beer and smoked! shocking and foolish! but we wont talk of that. As for Belloni, he was the most mercenary creature in the world, and, I do assure you, thought much more of his own fortune than of my health; however, I trust, by care, and the uncommon skill of Dr Lamotte, I shall get round in time."

In a far different strain was a letter from Mrs Macauley, exulting in her own humble way at the various uses to which she was put; and very triumphant at a visit she had had from Mr Melcombe, who had bought and *paid for* a handsome gold watch of Johnnie's own making. The com-

munication ending with the usual interrogation, "Was that like a robber, my dear?"

The distance between Oakley House and the Cottage was so short, that scarcely a day passed without some intercourse taking place with the generous kind-hearted pair, who possessed not less the will than the power to promote the comfort of their neighbours. Edith's prepossession in favour of Lady Arabella daily ripened into a warmer sentiment of affection, and was met by corresponding feelings on the part of that lady. But as Lady Elizabeth had all the exclusiveness of a little mind, she would have been quite jealous of this increasing intimacy—had she imagined there was more in it than attention to her *protegée.* For the first time since she left Inch Orran, Edith found herself in society congenial no less to her principles than to her taste and feelings. Lady Arabella reminded her much of her dear Mrs Malcolm. There was in both the same benign spirit of Christianity, shedding its divine halo over the daily actions of life—not dwelling on their tongues, but reigning in their hearts—making

their light to shine before men—but never using it to burn the conscience of those who differed from themselves. The same bland, genial spirit seemed to pervade her family—her daughters, with all the true refinement of birth and breeding, were free from the pitiful frivolities and paltry airs of fashion. They sought not in its "weak beggarly elements," either for happiness or distinction—but, young, beautiful, rich, and noble, they dared be "wise and good." Cheered and invigorated by this communion of mind, and similarity of tastes and pursuits, Edith's spirits gradually rose to their own natural pitch; and her eyes beamed, and her cheeks glowed, with all the animation, and more than all the beauty, of former days; for it was now beauty matured and embellished by expanded intellect, and more exalted feelings.

The time was thus passing pleasantly away, when Lady Waldegrave arrived to take possession of Woodlands for the remainder of the summer. This event was no sooner known to Lady Elizabeth, (for she did not even wait till it should be communicated,) than she was on the

fidgets to go to her daughter, whether for the purpose of embracing or reproaching, seemed uncertain,—probably both. She accordingly ordered her carriage, without even consulting Dr Lamotte; and, attended by her dogs, set out to spend the day where she had little reason to flatter herself she would be a welcome guest.

Edith had declined accompanying her; and, having a general invitation to Oakley House, gladly availed herself of her liberty to go and spend the day with her friends there.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALTHOUGH the distance between Oakley House and the Cottage was in reality short, it was lengthened to a considerable space by the beautiful diversity of the ground which intervened, and to which the walks and drives had been judiciously adapted. Edith could not help contrasting in her own mind, as she walked along, the difference between the sylvan graces of an English home scene, such as this, and the more picturesque beauties of her own Highland domain. At the dear recollection of Glenroy, her heart flew back to the loved haunts of its early days; and the thoughts of the present were all suspended while again she lived over the past. The gay visions of her childhood rose to view—but they who had formed her felicity then—where were they now? Ronald—Norman

—Reginald! For each and all of them how many were the bitter tears she had shed! and what had she reaped from these fair blossoms of life's morning? Alas! nought but regret, sorrow, and disappointment!

From contemplations such as these she was roused by coming suddenly in contact with Admiral Conway, as he advanced from an adjacent walk, leaning on the arm of a gentleman, with whom he appeared to be in earnest conversation. Conscious that the traces of her emotion must be visible on her countenance, Edith scarcely ventured to raise her eyes, still swimming in tears, and having exchanged salutations, would have passed on. But this the Admiral would not permit.

"Come, this is a fortunate encounter," cried he; "Lady Arabella has half quarrelled with me this morning, for depriving her of this gallant convoy," pointing to his friend, "with whom she had intended to figure off to the Cottage; but I shall make my peace handsomely if I return with such a fair prize.—Miss Malcolm, allow me to introduce Mr Melcombe."

Edith looked up in amazement at the mention of this name, and beheld a young man of noble mien and features, but so pale, and with such visible emotion on his countenance, that she could scarcely refrain from uttering an exclamation of alarm. But the next moment she smiled, to think this must be the unknown friend of Mrs Macauley, and she at once felt she had wronged him by her suspicions. All this was the conviction of a moment, while the Admiral went on,—

"The similarity of your names is so great, that I know not how we are to distinguish them in England, where we don't give the vowels such fair play as you do in Scotland. You must teach me the true pronunciation of your name, Miss Malcolm, that I may not offend its Celtic antiquity by confounding it with our Saxon appellatives."

"England has rid me of some of my Celtic prejudices," said Edith, "and has taught me what I certainly might have known before—that there is nothing in a name beyond the association of ideas we connect with it."

"And the associations," replied he, "are rather in favour of your name, distinguished as it has been in ancient times, as well as in modern days. I am, therefore, glad that England can lay claim to—to the patronymic of my gallant friend here.—Melcombe, what is the matter? are you ill?"

The question brought back more than the glow of health to Mr Melcombe's face, as he uttered hastily, "Yes—quite—but——"

"But you turn pale at the thoughts of hearing your panegyric proclaimed in a fair lady's ear? Well, depend upon it the deeds of Captain Melcombe would have shone ten thousand times brighter in her eyes, and sounded a thousand times sweeter in her ears, had they been achieved by a Captain Mocome or Mak-kum—which is it?"

"Neither," said Edith, smiling; "and you must not flatter yourself you will be able to pronounce a Highland name until you have first breathed our mountain air."

"Well, I hope to do that some day before I die; and that I shall take my first lesson from

you on the top of some Highland Parnassus. What say you to joining me in that expedition, Melcombe? I suspect you would find it a more arduous task to haul me up to the top of Ben-Lomond, than it was even to hoist the Greek flag over the Turkish crescent?"

"I trust I shall one day be allowed to make the attempt," said Mr Melcombe.

There was something in the tone of the voice, full, clear, and melodious as it was, which made Edith start, and unconsciously she looked with an enquiring gaze at the speaker. Again the colour mounted almost to his brow as he met her look. An unaccountable feeling of constraint seemed to take possession of him; and although the Admiral continued to talk away, without noticing the embarrassment of his companion, he remained nearly silent during the rest of the walk.

"Now, have I not made a good cruise of it?" said the Admiral to his lady, as he presented Edith, who was received, as usual, with open arms. "What more could you have done had you led the expedition yourself, my lady?"

"I could at least have had a little more pleasure, even if I did not presume to claim any of the merit of it," said she, smiling.

"I was sure of that," exclaimed the Admiral, with a triumphant air; "I was sure there would be a but, or an if, or an only in the case—women never are contented.—When you marry, Melcombe, take my advice and marry a real genuine discontented woman at once, and then you know what you are about; but we never know what to do with these laughing hyenas," pointing to Lady Arabella, whose smile was now turned into a laugh. "They are really very trying to the temper, for there's no knowing when they're in good humour or in bad; for my part, I'm kept, as you may see, in a constant state of alarm."

"'Conscience makes cowards of us all!' Is it not so, Mr Melcombe?" said Lady Arabella, gaily.

Again Edith naturally directed her look to the person addressed, and again she was struck with the changing colour and embarrassed expression of his countenance, as, with a forced smile, he was about to reply, when the Admiral

interposed:—" I see how it is," said he, kindly laying his hand on his shoulder, " ' the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' at the discussion we were engaged in, and the best cure for that is, to have recourse to our charts and compasses to settle the point; so, come along to the library;" and, taking his friend's arm, they left the room.

Lady Arabella was silent and thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said, " Pray, may I ask whether you had any previous acquaintance with Mr Melcombe?"

" None," replied Edith—" at least none that I am aware of, though 'tis like a dream to me having seen him before, but when or where I cannot tell." She then recounted to Lady Arabella, Mrs Macauley's adventure, and her own (as it now appeared) groundless suspicion.

Lady Arabella laughed heartily at the idea of his ever having been taken for a highwayman, and said, he had probably been dining with them the evening of Mrs Macauley's rencontre.

" It must have been at Glenroy we met," said Edith, musingly; " and I think I recollect some-

thing of his air and features, though I failed to recognise him."

"That is scarcely possible," said Lady Arabella; "his is a countenance that, once seen, could not be soon forgotten."

Edith sighed to think how slight and transient were the impressions the most noble and gifted had made upon her then, when there was but one object on which her thoughts cared to dwell.

"This young man," said Lady Arabella, "is, as you may perceive, a prodigious favourite of the Admiral's, and I may also add, of mine. Besides having been the means of saving the life of my second son, at the risk of his own, there is something so prepossessing both in his countenance and manners—something so open and ingenuous in his whole bearing, that a much slighter recommendation than Edward's, would have inclined us to him. Hitherto we have found him a very delightful companion; but his manner is much changed to-day, or it may be my fancy. Were you struck with any thing peculiar?"

"I certainly was," replied Edith, "even at the first moment we met; and now I think I recollect when a child, a Lady Melcombe spending some days at Glenroy, and having two sons with her. Probably this may be one of them."

"If it were so," said Lady Arabella, "his emotion, poor fellow, might be easily accounted for, by the circumstance of his mother having been afterwards divorced."

"Do you know nothing of his family?" enquired Edith.

"Nothing. All that is known of him is, that he was serving on board a merchant ship at the time when it was chased and attacked by pirates. I wish the Admiral were here to explain the affair to you, for I cannot do it justice: but you would have to listen to so much nautical detail, which (like myself) you could not understand, that it is perhaps as well to give my round unvarnished tale; the substance of which is, that this young man, by his skill, bravery, and resolution, not only was the means of saving the ship, but, by his boldness and heroism, succeeded in boarding and finally capturing the pirate, laden

with rich booty, of which a considerable share was allotted to him. He afterwards fitted out a Greek armed vessel, of which he took the command, and has performed many gallant and even brilliant exploits in the cause; but he was so severely wounded in one engagement, that he was obliged to retire from service. His health, however, seems now nearly re-established: but what are his future plans, the Admiral and he only know, as I am not of the council.—And now I have told you all I can tell of our hero and your highwayman."

And that little was sufficient to make Edith already feel an interest in one, to whom, even in his bright career, some painful or melancholy history seemed attached.

When the Admiral and his young friend returned to the drawing-room, the party had been increased by the arrival of Lord and Lady Ellersley, and one or two chance guests. The conversation, both before and during dinner, became general; and Edith remarked, that Mr Melcombe bore his part in it with an ease and spirit, very different from the constrained

air and abrupt manner which had marked his first introduction to her. She could not avoid observing, too, that he seemed carefully to shun all occasions of addressing her, or even of rendering those little ordinary attentions, which become more marked in the breach than the observance; yet, more than once, she had caught his eye fixed upon her with an expression of deep undefinable meaning, which confirmed her in her surmises, that somehow or other she was associated in his mind with recollections of painful import. Under this impression, Edith felt no less distant and embarrassed in her demeanour towards him; and when they separated in the evening, it seemed as if they parted still greater strangers than when they had met.

Edith failed not to make Mrs Macauley acquainted with this favourable introduction to her friend; and received a delighted and triumphant letter in return, interspersed with reflections in her usual style, and containing various particulars of Johnnie and his family, who were now in more comfortable circumstances. Johnnie had got payment of a large account; and the

children were all better, and Mrs Macauley, junior, keeping up wonderfully; and so there was great reason to be contented and happy, especially since this fine young man had turned out so well.

CHAPTER XIX.

Lady Elizabeth returned from her visit in great good humour. Lady Waldegrave, she said, had been delighted to see her—had only delayed informing her of her arrival till she had got every thing arranged—and was to have driven over for her, (that very day,) had she not been anticipated by her arrival. To sum up the whole, Florinda had presented her with some of what she called perfect gems of art—but which were, in fact, the mere rubbish of her collection. She was so occupied in admiring and arranging her baubles, that Edith learned little more from her than that Sir Reginald was not at Woodlands; that Florinda had appeared rather *abattu*, but had promised to take an early opportunity of calling.

The following day, as Edith sat alone in the drawing-room, (Lady Elizabeth always spending the mornings in her own dressing-room,) a carriage drove up, and presently Lady Waldegrave was announced. Edith started up, and for a moment stood aghast at finding herself thus suddenly confronted with her heartless, treacherous rival. Lady Waldegrave, however, did not appear to notice her agitation; but advanced with the most perfect ease, and, embracing her, laid her cheek to hers; and, with her sweetly modulated voice, said, "How happy I am to meet you again, dear Edith!"

Edith could only bow in acknowledgment, and for some moments remained in silent agitation; but making an effort to regain her composure, she rang the bell, and desired the servant to inform Lady Elizabeth of Lady Waldegrave's arrival.

"I beg pardon, Edith, love," said her ladyship, "but the visit is not to mamma, but to you. I was so sorry, love, we could not meet in town; but it really is impossible to do as one wishes there. And by the by, how much better

you look than when I saw you in Scotland! I don't think the Scotch air at all favourable to beauty, you must know; but you have made a wonderful escape from Scotch-ness of every kind." And she sighed as she said it, while she surveyed her with the patronizing air of one so gifted in herself, that she could afford to bestow approval on another. And certainly Lady Waldegrave's charms had suffered no diminution, for she looked, if possible, more beautiful and captivating than ever.

"I came early, and alone, because I really wished to see you by yourself, and to explain many things, which I am aware must have appeared very strange and unaccountable to you, and which I fear have prejudiced you sadly against me."

"Excuse me," said Edith; "but I cannot *now* listen to any explanation—the facts spoke for themselves at the time; that time has been long since passed, and with it all resentment, all regret, on my part."

"Then, you do forgive whatever may have

appeared mysterious and inexplicable in my conduct?"

"I forgive all who ever injured me," said Edith, mildly, but emphatically, "as I hope to be forgiven."

"Dear Edith! you were always kind and generous. But, if I injured you, Heaven knows it was unintentionally; for, indeed, I ever loved you; and, I do assure you, it has many times made me quite wretched, to think of the cruel estrangement that took place between us." And her ladyship put her handkerchief to her eyes. "But for that artful designing woman, Madame Latour, whom mamma foolishly committed me to, I am sure it never would have happened. Indeed, had I been at all aware that you had the slightest *tendresse* for your cousin"——

"I must again repeat, Lady Waldegrave, that this retrospection is worse than useless—it is painful."

"Well, then, dearest Edith, let all be forgotten; and henceforth let us be as friends and sisters."

"All is forgiven," said Edith, with emotion.

"And; in sincere heartfelt wishes for your happiness, I am your friend—more, I cannot say."

"Then we are reconciled, and you will come and visit me—indeed, if you are sincere in your wishes for my happiness, you will; for I cannot possibly be happy while this estrangement lasts. Say, then, you will come to Woodlands—do, dearest love!"

"I cannot promise at present," said Edith.

"There is one thing I can assure you of," said Lady Waldegrave, "if you have any dislike—any unpleasant feeling, at the thoughts of meeting another person, you need have no scruple on that account, as he is absent."

Edith's cheeks glowed as she said,—"I can have nothing to dread in meeting the husband of Lady Waldegrave. But do not urge me farther at present." At that moment a message was brought from Lady Elizabeth, desiring to see Lady Waldegrave in her dressing-room.

"Promise me, then, that you remain here till my return, for I have still something to say to you that nearly concerns my own happiness.

Surely, you will not refuse me that?" And Edith promised to await her return.

Left to herself, she began to reflect more calmly on the part she had to perform. That Florinda should have wished to be reconciled to her, and have even sought to exculpate herself, was natural; but that she should have sought a renewal of intimacy with so much earnestness, was more than she had anticipated. Selfish, heartless, and treacherous, as she had hitherto appeared, surely this could only proceed from a good motive. For in what could she, poor and dependent as she now was, benefit the gay, prosperous, Lady Waldegrave? Perhaps she was entitled to the allowance she claimed, from the weak and evil counsellors who had been the guides of her youth; and if, even after all, she was not happy—as she feared she was not—might she not even yet prove of service to her, and should she allow any wayward feelings of her own to stand in the way of such a duty? The result of Edith's deliberations was, that in accordance with those divine precepts, by which she professed to be guided, she would sacrifice

her feelings even for those who had sacrificed her happiness to their own.

Lady Waldegrave's visit to her mother was not of long duration. When she returned, she said, "I have just settled with mamma, that she is to come and dine quietly at Woodlands to-morrow, and stay all night; now, let me beg, dearest Edith, that you will gratify me by accompanying her. It will be charity to me in every way, for I do assure you, nothing can be more *triste* than I am at present. You won't meet a soul, but two very charming girls, Lady Harriet and Lady Maria Bingly, and I shall be better able to open my heart to you, and to ask your advice.—But who is this?" cried she, as she cast a glance towards the window. Then suddenly starting up, she exclaimed, "Lady Arabella Conway! the very best of good, dull women—I must make my escape:—But who is it that accompanies her? What a very fine-looking man! I surely have seen him somewhere in town." Edith named Mr Melcombe, as she also caught a glimpse of Lady Arabella and him approaching. "He is very handsome, and will be

the greatest acquisition to my *corps dramatique*, for you must know I intend to have private theatricals; but, pray, don't breathe a syllable of it to mamma, or she will want to take a part. Now, pray, present him to me."

The entrance of Lady Arabella and her *protegée* here stopped all farther comment.

After the usual enquiries had been made, and Mr Melcombe had been presented to Lady Waldegrave, she said, with all her fascinating but artificial sweetness, "I fear we are not entitled to rank Mr Melcombe in our wild clan; fortunately for himself, he belongs to a more civilized community."

Mr Melcombe slightly bowed, and coloured as he replied, "I was not aware it was more fortunate to have been born an English than a Scotchman, since both are alike Britons. But," he added, with a still deepening hue, "the sea is the only country to which I lay claim."

"What would Sir Reginald say to that compliment of yours, Lady Waldegrave?" enquired Lady Arabella.

"Sir Reginald is already aware of my senti-

ments on the subject," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly; "he knows that I prefer England to Scotland in all things, and only love it less than France and Italy.—How grave Edith looks at this declaration! Do you remember how shocked you were at Glenroy, when I ventured to whisper that I preferred myrtle to heather? I am sure you expected some of your dark brown mountains to fall upon me—Did you not?"

"I hope I did not carry my *amor patriæ* quite so far," said Edith. And she could not repress a sigh as she added, "But we are naturally hurt when we hear the objects of our affection lightly spoken of by others."

"Especially, as you know 'tis said, the uglier the object, the more intensely and unreasonably we love it," said Lady Waldegrave, laughing.

"Mere beauty certainly does not long retain its influence on the affections," said Mr Melcombe.

"So it has been said, but I very much doubt the truth of the assertion," replied Lady Waldegrave, with a slight shade of displeasure on her countenance; "at least I have never heard any

good reason why it should not." And she surveyed herself in an opposite mirror with an air of haughty satisfaction.

"I am no metaphysician," said Mr Melcombe, "so I cannot pretend to enter into the subtleties of the question; but it is easy to conceive, that the influence of the mind must be much more permanent than that of the senses."

"Constancy," said Lady Arabella, "is one of those good, old-fashioned, moral virtues which is no longer *à la mode;* we rarely hear of such a thing now-a-days."

"It surely does not deserve the name of inconstancy, when we withdraw our affections from an undeserving object—does it, Edith?" said Lady Waldegrave.

Edith was shocked at what she felt was implied in these words, and for a minute or two was unable to reply. When she raised her eyes, she encountered those of Mr Melcombe fixed upon her with an expression of the deepest interest. But the serenity of her countenance returned, and she replied, "Every thing must depend upon circumstances; in some cases it

must be a duty to renounce a misplaced attachment—in others, to adhere to it."

"I am not such a casuist as you," said Lady Waldegrave, carelessly, "for I really cannot perceive the difference; but how in the world has a passing remark on the respective beauties of heath and myrtle, turned into a lackadaisical discussion on the duties of constancy? I really must have something to sweeten my imagination after it. Pray, Mr Melcombe, have the goodness to fetch me a bit of something very fragrant from the conservatory."

"You could scarcely find one worse qualified to execute your commands," said he; "for my botanical lore is almost confined to sea-weed. I am so utterly ignorant, I fear I may commit some unpardonable solecism in good taste, if not in good breeding, by my selection."

"Well, to render your offence less glaring," said Lady Arabella, "you shall bring something for each and all of us."

"What! and so run the risk of offending three ladies instead of one! And am I to have

no reward if I should succeed in pleasing all or any of you?"

"Mr Melcombe is the very last person from whom I should have expected mercenary stipulations of any sort," said Lady Arabella; "but it proves the old and homely saying to be a true one, that every man has his price.—May I ask what yours is upon the present occasion?"

"My reward shall be discretionary," said he, with a smile; "and any thing given with good will, will be acceptable;" and he stepped into the conservatory."

"That is rather an odd person," said Lady Waldegrave; "his manner, though somewhat *brusque*, is *piquant*, and he certainly is very handsome, and I must say, distinguished looking. My maid said to me yesterday, she was sure my ladyship would approve of my new groom of the chambers, for that he had *l'air distingué;* after that I cannot think of bestowing it upon Mr Melcombe."

In a few minutes he returned with a handful of flowers.

"I wish I were as versed in their various significations as Ophelia was, that I might make my offerings appropriate. There is geranium for your ladyship," said he to Lady Arabella; "but of what it is emblematic I must declare myself ignorant."

"——— Genteel geranium,
With a leaf for all that comes,"

said she, as she plucked one and gave it to him, "that, and a thank you, is all I can bestow."

Mr Melcombe then presented some slips of myrtle to Lady Waldegrave, and said, "As your ladyship has declared your preference, I have been spared a choice." And without waiting for an acknowledgment, he turned to Edith, and offered her two sprigs of heath. "I wish they had been Highland heather instead of foreign heath," said he, "for then you would have prized them more."

"But with all my national prejudice, I could not have admired them so much," said she, as she took the brilliant exotics.

"But you would perhaps have rewarded me

better," said he, forcing a laugh to hide his embarrassment.

"What a reproach for my churlishness," said Edith, as she returned him one of the sprigs, but she coloured at the pleasure that beamed in his eyes as he received the trifling gift. Lady Waldegrave never could endure that another should engage attention while she was present. Unaccustomed to meet with neglect, on the present occasion she mistook it for shyness; and self-love whispered to her, that the handsome unknown stranger was only dazzled by her charms and distinction into distance and reserve. She therefore, in her sweetest and most winning manner, called him to her on some frivolous pretext, and contrived to detain him in exclusive conversation till Lady Arabella rose to take leave. She then said, "I flatter myself, Lady Arabella, we shall meet very often while we are such near neighbours; and that I shall also have the pleasure of seeing Admiral Conway and Mr Melcombe at Woodlands."

Mr Melcombe acknowledged the compliment by a bow, and the visitors severally departed.

CHAPTER XX.

It was not without some violence to her feelings that Edith went to testify her reconciliation with Lady Waldegrave, by visiting her in her own house; but she repressed these indications of feelings not yet wholly subdued, and calmly, meekly resigned herself to the duty required. If she had admired Woodlands on a first survey, it appeared to still greater advantage now, when nature and art seemed to have been taxed to their utmost to give the last finish to its charms; and all around breathed only of the refinement of luxury and pleasure. To those who could believe in the happiness caused by external circumstances, this would have seemed a very paradise.

Lady Waldegrave received her guests in the most kind, caressing manner; and having pro-

vided a lively old French marquis as an escort for Lady Elizabeth, she consigned them to the care of each other; and thus happily rid of her, she directed her whole attention to Edith, whom she introduced to her friends, Ladies Harriet and Maria Bingly, as her dear and only sister; and she brought her child to kiss and welcome his pretty aunt to Woodlands. Then she must show Edith every thing herself, and have her opinion about many things; and Edith was led from drawing-room to drawing-room, and from boudoirs to conservatories and aviaries; and there was so much to look at, and praise and admire, that it was impossible to enjoy. There were pictures, and marbles, and china, and cabinets, and tables, and vases, each and any of which would have been a study for a day; but which were yet too various and numerous to be duly appreciated on a first survey. Trades-people were still employed in some of the rooms arranging the varied treasures of art, which were designed to form one exquisite and entire collection.

"All this, you may suppose, has not been done

for nothing," said Lady Waldegrave, as they ended the hurried and imperfect examination, and she threw herself on a couch in her dressing-room, "and indeed I am almost frightened when I think how much it has cost. Then we were so cheated at first, and bought such rubbish at such enormous prices; but that is the case with every body at first. One must pay for a knowledge of the arts, as well as for knowledge of every kind; and at any rate, it is surely better that money should be spent upon fine pictures and marbles, than on the turf or at the gaming-table." Edith was hurt at this indirect attack upon her husband, and thought how different must be the perception even of *taste* in the material, from what it was in the moral world, when a wife could thus seek to excuse her own extravagance by proclaiming her husband's errors. Lady Waldegrave went on—"But the great work I have now in hand—for there is no living in the country without occupation—is a pretty little theatre. I have been re-modelling—in fact I may say building—it was originally a pavilion or a banqueting-room, or some of these

stupid, senseless, antiquated things, which one's ancestors deformed their grounds with. I have had it turned into something both useful and ornamental; and I intend to open it on Dudley's birth-day with a French play and ballet, in which you, dear Edith, will take a part. Don't say you wont, for you positively *must*. But although I have gone to work as economically as possible, and had plans, and estimates, and all those sort of things sent to me, yet it has grown into something expensive too—not that I should grudge it at all, as it will be such a source of amusement to myself and friends, besides having given employment to poor people; in short, it is a thing calculated (in my opinion) to do good. But in the meantime, I am persecuted to death for money by the man who undertook the thing; although he must know that of course he will be paid, yet he is for ever boring me with his bills."

"But he only asks his own," said Edith; "poor people cannot work without wages. How are they to support themselves and their families?"

"O, there are a thousand ways of managing

that; and there is nobody so poor that cannot get credit somewhere."

"But how ruinous for the poor to contract debt, if even they could."

"As to that, it can be no worse for the poor than for the rich."

"It is bad for both," said Edith; "but the poor are most to be pitied when their sufferings are occasioned by the thoughtlessness and extravagance of the great."

"O, certainly, it is very wrong in people not to pay their bills when they can do it."

"Can do it!" exclaimed Edith; "why should people ever have bills that they cannot pay? Surely that is robbery of the worst description."

"Why, there are many things that people in a certain station must have, and if they happen not to have the money just at the moment to pay them, where is the harm of having a bill?"

"None, if they are sure of having the money to discharge them—otherwise it is contracting debt."

"Well, there is no harm in that, I hope? else you will think me very wicked; for, to tell

the truth, I am over head and ears in debt, and at this moment do not know where to get even a few guineas!" This was said with affected levity, and Edith could only utter an exclamation of surprise and consternation.

"The fact is," continued her ladyship, speaking with great rapidity, "I have been very unfortunate. First of all, my fortune was not what it was said to be, by several thousands a-year; then, when I married," here she heaved a sigh, "I was quite ignorant of the value of money, and of course spent a great deal; then, Sir Reginald has never chosen to give himself any trouble in the management of our establishment, and I can't do it—so we have had horrid people, who cheated us on all hands: and you may imagine how that was, with three establishments to keep up—Waldegrave Abbey, my town residence, (both of which, by-the-by, I greatly improved, and entirely new furnished;) and this, besides those Highland places, which I am told are very expensive also. To complete the whole, at the time of my marriage I made an enormous settlement upon mamma, quite out of

all proportion to my income—you will scarcely believe that she actually draws very near three thousand a-year from me! It is much more, I do assure you, than I can afford, or she can have the slightest occasion for."

"Surely there must be some mistake on one side or other," said Edith, "for Lady Elizabeth complains of being very much straitened in her circumstances."

"Yes, she is always complaining," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly, "but I assure you it is the case. With her jointure from the Glenroy estate, and what I allow her besides, she has above three thousand a-year—A monstrous sum for her! She certainly must either be saving money, or she is pillaged by the people about her in a scandalous manner. I ventured to hint that to her some time ago, but she was quite angry, so I have never entered on the subject again; but if the thing was placed before her in a proper light, (and I know no one who could do it so well as yourself, Edith, love,) I am sure she would see the propriety of giving up at least one thousand a-year."

Edith was unable to articulate a word, so much was she struck by this extraordinary communication. Lady Waldegrave took no notice of her silence, but went on—"I should be ready to make any sacrifice myself consistent with what I owe to my rank and station—but I don't see how I *can* do it. I might, to be sure, part with a few servants and horses, perhaps; but that would make very little difference—a few hundreds a-year, more or less, is really not worth breaking up one's establishment for."

"But if you were to begin, it is more than probable Sir Reginald would follow your example."

"But it is not with *me* the retrenchment ought to begin."

"Whether or not, you might at least make trial of it."

"And, in other words, make myself wretched and uncomfortable; and give up my own innocent gratifications, that he may have more money to squander in all sorts of horrid ways; besides I am certain I only spend what I have a right to."

" And what does Sir Reginald say?" enquired Edith, fearfully.

" O, as to Sir Reginald," replied Lady Waldegrave, contemptuously, " he is the last person I should think of consulting;—the man who spends his life between Crockford's and Newmarket, you may guess, is no very wise counsellor, and is not likely to extricate me from my difficulties.—But what is the matter? are you ill?"

" Oh, Florinda, how shocked I am at all you tell me!" exclaimed Edith, bursting into tears— " how dreadful to be living in such a state!— wronging the poor, deceiving and ruining your husband! Seeking to deprive your mother of what is due to her—neglectful of what God requires of you. Ah, Florinda! how can you barter your happiness and the happiness of others for such toys as these?"

" Really, Edith, you talk in a most extraordinary manner!" said Lady Waldegrave, in great displeasure. " Any one who heard you would suppose I had committed every crime under the sun! Instead of which, the sole amount

of my wickedness consists simply in being rather in want of a little money—that's all; and as for Sir Reginald, he must know how I am teazed for money; for we have several times been threatened with an execution in the house by some of those horrid people."

"Oh, Florinda! forgive me, if I have spoken too severely," said Edith, in deep emotion; but"——

"O, I am very forgiving," said Lady Waldegrave, coldly, "and very charitable too, for I really don't believe you meant the cruel things you said; and if they had been addressed to Sir Reginald, they would have been very applicable—the sums he has lost at play are enormous—I know that from the best authority; and also that at the last Newmarket Meeting, he threw away upwards of thirty thousand pounds upon foolish bets on a favourite horse; so I have little to reproach myself with in comparison of that! Indeed, I only do as the rest of the world does; but I am sure I have bored you to death with my annoyances, so come let us return to the drawing-room, and do try what you can do for

me with mamma—I fear she will be quite angry at me for having monopolized you so long—she is so fond of you! I do think you have more to say with her, and could, if you chose, manage her better, than any body in the world; but there is the dressing-bell—will you have one of my maids to assist you! But you need not be very *recherché* in your *toilette*, as I expect no company, and indeed I am not in spirits for company at present.—Fanchon, show Miss Malcolm to her apartment."

CHAPTER XXI.

When Lady Waldegrave joined the party, the brilliancy of her appearance but little accorded with the account of her pecuniary difficulties; and even Lady Elizabeth exclaimed somewhat spitefully, "Why, Florinda, you dress in your country house as though you held a court!"

"You must scold Mademoiselle Fanchon then, mamma," said Lady Waldegrave, carelessly, "as I submitted myself entirely to her discretion to-day. Dress, I assure you, was least in my thoughts."

In spite of the flattering introduction of Edith to the Ladies Bingley, they seemed to regard even the dear and only sister of Lady Waldegrave with somewhat of suspicious distance; for they were mere elegant automatons, fearful of committing themselves by any thing approaching

to familiarity with one who dressed indifferently, according to their estimation, and who had never been at D—— House—and who, of course, had none of the current phrases of the day. Edith was too meek and gentle to resent the sort of repressed ill-breeding (how different from native politeness!) of such manners; she felt only pity for those whose minds had been thus cramped and fettered by the bondage of their own little sphere, falsely called the great world.

The same magnificence pervaded every part of the establishment—every thing was perfect in its style, and yet how little enjoyment there seemed in the midst of it all! Lady Waldegrave wore an air of languor and discontent—the two ladies lacked beaux, and were dull and vapid—Edith was depressed by what she had heard, as contrasted with what she saw—and the only two who seemed to enter into the pleasures of the table, were Lady Elizabeth and the old Marquis Dubocage, who ate like pigeons, and chattered like magpies.

Dinner was over, and the dessert had been placed on the table, when a carriage was heard

driving round to the entrance; the dogs barked—the bell rang—voices were heard in the hall.

"Who is that?" enquired Lady Waldegrave.

"Sir Reginald and Mr Harris, my lady," was the reply.

"Sir Reginald!" exclaimed she, with more of surprise than pleasure; "and that odious Mr Harris!—Have they dined?"

"Sir Reginald has ordered dinner in the library, my lady."

Lady Waldegrave coloured; but said, "We are obliged to him, at least, for sparing us a renewal of even Fricourt's ambrosial cates, which certainly would not be improved by a seasoning of Newmarket dust, especially as it never is gold dust."

To Edith the sensation was strange and painful; but a few steps were between her and Reginald—Reginald, once the beloved, the betrothed of her heart—the arbiter of her destiny. Reginald the faithless—the forsworn—the husband of another! And all the sad and solemn scenes that had passed between them rose to her view. She shuddered, and, for a moment, felt almost over-

powered by the conflict of long dormant feelings, suddenly awoke to painful consciousness.

"How I dislike these abrupt arrivals," said Lady Elizabeth, in an ill-natured tone; "they always do flurry one's nerves. I see it has the same effect upon you, my dear," to Edith.

"If there is to be any thing of a *scène*," said Lady Waldegrave, sarcastically, "we had best return to the drawing-room; we shall at least have the benefit of Eau de Cologne, and couches there."

Edith felt the taunt, and the colour returned to her cheeks with a deepened glow. At that moment, the little boy entered, and came running up to his mamma.

"Do you know, mamma, that papa is come?" he cried.

"Yes, love, have you seen him?"

"Yes, mamma; but I don't love him to-day."

"Why so, my darling?"

"Because he bade me go away, and not teaze him."

"What a kind good papa you have got, Dudley," said her Ladyship, "is he not?"

"He is very good sometimes; for you know, mammà, he sent me such a pretty little phaeton from town, and two poneys *so* small!" and he clasped his hands in admiration.

"Don't lean upon me so, Dudley," cried her ladyship, in a tone of displeasure, "and see how you have dropped your grapes! How tiresome children are! Now, go, my love, 'tis very late—time you were in bed. We are going to have coffee. Good night, my sweetest;" and with a kiss the child was dismissed, as the ladies and their old beau returned to the drawing-room. The evening passed heavily along. Lady Elizabeth and her Marquis played at *écarté*. Lady Waldegrave and her friends played, and sung, and talked of operas, and turned over new music, and Edith sat apart trying to read, but unable to turn her thoughts from the strange anomalous scenes that surrounded her. To the senses all was light, and beauty, and fragrance, and melody; but oh, the evil passions, the moral degradation, which lay hid beneath the specious show! Her train of reflections was suddenly broken by the entrance of Sir Reginald and his

friend. He accosted Lady Waldegrave with a careless "How do you do?" as he merely touched her hand, and bowed slightly to the rest of the company without observing Edith, whose head rested on her hand as she still bent over her book.

"Pretty well," replied Lady Waldegrave, with a disdainful coolness. "Perhaps I ought to rise, and make my best curtsy for the kind enquiry, tardy as it is."

Sir Reginald turned on his heel, and as he did so, his eye fell on Edith; he started, and for a moment stood transfixed to the spot, then darting forward, he exclaimed, "Edith!" and, seizing her hand, he held it in both of his, and gazed on her with looks expressive of surprise and delight. But far different feelings were Edith's. Surprised indeed she was; but still more was she shocked at beholding the ravages a few short years had wrought on the person of Sir Reginald. How different from the Reginald she had once fondly loved! Lit up as his countenance was with the expression of pleasure, its habitual cast had stamped its character on every

feature. All were sharpened and contracted as by strong excitement and violent passions; and his flushed cheek, haggard eyes, and reckless air, told a tale from which Edith turned shuddering away. But Sir Reginald had evidently drank enough of champagne to make him either insensible of, or indifferent to, the nicer shades of feeling. He seated himself by her, and continued to gaze upon her with looks of admiration.

"How glad I am to see you, Edith," said he, taking her hand, "and to see you here! I had'nt an idea you were even in England!"

Edith answered as calmly and briefly as she could, that she had been residing for some time with her maternal aunt.

"But you have left her now, I hope, and are come to us?"

"I at present reside with Lady Elizabeth."

"With Lady Elizabeth!" repeated Reginald, contemptuously, "that is no home for you, Edith. —You must remain with us—you must indeed. But you look well and happy," said he, gazing intently upon her. "You have grown handsomer

than ever you were. I should scarcely have known you!"

There was something in the manner as well as in the matter which offended Edith's feelings. True, there was still a grace and refinement in the mien and air, remote from the coarse familiarity of vulgar life and manners. But how much of moral deformity may be veiled beneath the mask of worldly refinement! Edith would have risen to join the rest of the party, but Sir Reginald would not permit her.

"Why should you wish to leave me?" he said, again seizing her hand. "Surely, after so long a separation, cousins might have something to say to each other.—It was not so we used to meet! Ah, Edith! surely you have not quite lost all interest in me?" He spoke with a kind of melancholy earnestness that affected Edith, and she looked upon him more in sorrow than in anger.

"No," said she—"indeed I have not. I feel sincerely interested in all that concerns Lady Waldegrave and your little boy."

Sir Reginald sighed,—"You were always an

angel, Edith; and I——. Now, don't go. I will talk to you of any thing—of my boy. You say you take an interest in him! There is something, then, we are both interested in—perhaps the only thing."

At that moment Lady Waldegrave called, in a sarcastic tone, while she touched the harp,—"As your success on the turf is always a matter of certainty, Sir Reginald, I am prepared to celebrate it with an *Io Pæan*, as soon as you think proper to announce your victories; or, perhaps, Miss Malcolm is to come forward as chorus, and proclaim your triumphs?"

Sir Reginald's brow contracted, and his eyes flashed fire at this insulting speech. "Miss Malcolm knows enough of my history to know it is one which affords no matter of exultation," he said, bitterly.

Edith felt the taunt, and it raised a momentary glow on her cheek; but she only answered it by looking calmly at Lady Waldegrave, whose eyes sank beneath the mild rebuke; and, colouring with shame and resentment, she swept her

fingers across the harp, and calling to Lady Harriet to join her, they commenced.

Edith rose, and drew close to the table where Lady Elizabeth sat. Sir Reginald, after standing for a few minutes with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon her, suddenly started from his reverie. "Come, Harris," he said, "let us have a game at billiards;" and, quitting the apartment, Mr Harris, who was lounging over a newspaper, rose and followed.

Edith was glad when the evening was ended, and only wished her visit was also brought to a termination. Lady Waldegrave and she parted for the night with mutual coldness and constraint.

CHAPTER XXII.

When the party met at a late breakfast the following morning, Sir Reginald's brow wore a still deeper gloom, and Lady Waldegrave seemed inclined to be no less peevish and sarcastic than on the preceding evening. The two ladies maintained their chilling reserve, and though Mr Harris talked, his conversation was addressed to Sir Reginald, and related solely to the turf.

Edith felt the painfulness of her situation, for although Sir Reginald's manner was less *empressé* than it had been at their first meeting, yet he still singled her out as the only person to whom he paid the slightest attention. Such was the state of the party, when a servant entered to say, that a Mr and Mrs M'Dow begged leave to wait upon Sir Reginald and Lady Walde-

grave. Sir Reginald repeated the name in surprise, and he looked at Edith as for an explanation, but she could give none.

"Some of Sir Reginald's Highland friends," said Lady Waldegrave; "I can have no acquaintance with them, you had therefore better receive your own guests in another room."

"Any one who comes from Glenroy is welcome," said Sir Reginald, as if stung to contradict even his own feelings; "show Mr and Mrs M'Dow in."

Straightway, preceded by the groom of the chambers, entered Mr and Mrs M'Dow, leading between them their eldest born, a great, uncouth-looking child. Mr M'Dow had evidently been in the hands of a London tailor, but to little purpose; for not all the leather and prunella of London could re-model Mr M'Dow. No cost seemed to have been spared in the attiring of his lady, who was decked out in a most brilliant pelisse and bonnet, in the extreme of the fashion. Miss M'Dow was arrayed in a similar costume, and, like her mother, was standing out with finery.

"How do you do, Mr M'Dow?" said Sir Reginald, rising and shaking hands with him heartily, as if determined to carry off matters boldly. "Mrs M'Dow, Lady Waldegrave," waving his hand; "pray, sit down. You are in very good time for breakfast."

"You are extremely obliging, Sir Reginald," said Mr M'Dow; "in fact, this is our second meal, for we breakfasted before we set out. However, I dare say we are all pretty well appetized again—But is it possible I see Miss Malcolm here?" for the first time perceiving Edith. "I'm amazed and delighted to see you here;" and stalking up to her, he shook her vehemently by the hand; "this is just as it should be! and how amazingly well you look!"

"Here is a chair for you, Mr M'Dow," called Sir Reginald, pointing to one next himself.

"You are extremely polite, Sir Reginald." Then addressing Lady Waldegrave, "I need scarcely ask how your ladyship has been since I had the honour of seeing you at Glenroy?" A slight, haughty bend of the head was the only

answer vouchsafed; and, nothing daunted, Mr M'Dow resumed, in a still more insinuating manner, " I hope we have not taken too great a freedom in bringing our little Missy with us; but she can behave herself like a lady when she chooses.—Mrs M'Dow, I think you had better take off her bonnet and pelisse; she'll be cooler without them."

Here Miss M'Dow was disencumbered of her pelisse and bonnet, and exhibited a coarse, blubber-lipped, sun-burnt visage, with staring sea-green eyes, a quantity of rough sandy hair, and mulatto neck, with merely a rim of white above the shoulders.

" I think she would be better wanting her gloves too," said Mr M'Dow, anxious to display as much as possible of the beauties of his offspring. The gloves were now taken off, and a pair of thick mulberry paws set at liberty.

" Now you must not touch any thing, Mysie," whispered Mrs M'Dow, as Mysie prepared to lay hands on a *Sévre* cup and saucer.

" You had better send her over to me," said Mr M'Dow, " and I'll keep her in order."

" She'll be very good with me, Mr M'Dow," replied the lady, in a brisk provincial accent, and, with a strong arm hauling up Miss Mysie, planted her upon her knee. She then poured out tea from her own cup for her, which was sucked in with an avidity that threatened to carry the saucer along with it.

" She is very dry!" said Mrs M'Dow, in a manner as if she thought it of importance.

" She seems really very thirsty, poor wifey," said Mr M'Dow, in a similar tone; " but the day is uncommonly warm, and we met a great deal of dust on the road; it was an amazing relief to enter your policy: this is a most beautiful place of yours, Sir Reginald, and a most elegant and shooperb house! You'll think little of Glenroy after this?"

" A mere cit's box," said Sir Reginald, contemptuously.

" A *ceet's* box, Sir Reginald! it's a perfect palace; I don't know that ever I saw any thing so shooperb! and there's so much taste in the grounds, and every thing in such high order. Mrs M'Dow was prodigiously struck with the

grandeur of the flowers; and I was amazingly diverted with our little Missy's remark, 'Fawther,' says she, 'this is a far finer gaarden than yours, but there's no berry-bushes in't'—hoch, hoch, ho! Altogether it's really a perfect paradise!"

Edith's native politeness prevailed over her feelings, and seeing Mrs M'Dow had no chance of being noticed by the other ladies present, she addressed a few words to her, and received such answers as might be expected from a commonplace, vulgar woman, full of the egotism of her own concerns.

"I hope we are to be favoured with a sight of your young folks, Sir Reginald," said Mr M'Dow.

"I have only one spoilt little fellow," replied he, "but you shall see him." And he ordered one of the servants to fetch him.

"This is his walking hour," said Lady Waldegrave, with a look of displeasure.

"Only one!" exclaimed Mr M'Dow; "here am I with no less than four—two girls and two boys—But here comes your young gentleman.

Come away, sir," in his most conciliating tone; "will you shake hands with me?" But the child looked doubtfully at him; "then will you go and speak to that lady?" pointing to Mrs M'Dow.

"No; mamma does not choose me to speak to people I don't know."

"Ay! but would you not like to kiss that pretty little missy there?"

"O no, not at all; mamma does not allow me to kiss any body, and I would not kiss her, she is so ugly."

Mr and Mrs M'Dow both turned very red at this insult to the charms of their daughter, while Lady Waldegrave, with a smile, called, "You may now go to your walk, love, you have done very well."

But Sir Reginald catching him up in his arms, said, with affected anger, "You are a saucy little dog, and I must send you to Scotland to make a Highland laird of you."

Lady Waldegrave shuddered, and in a low voice exclaimed, "Heaven forbid!"

"But I won't be a Scotch laird," replied the

young master; "for my mamma says I am to be a British Peer, and that is much better."

"Ay!" exclaimed Mr M'Dow, "you are really very nice; you'll not be a good Highland laird, and you'll not shake hands with me, and you'll not speak to my wife, and you'll not kiss my daughter!—Will you tell me your name, then?"

"O, yes, papa calls me Reginald; mamma calls me Dudley; but my real name is Reginald Dudley Waldegrave Malcolm."

"That's a very grand name! I have a little boy of my own, who has a good long name; but it's nothing like yours."

"What is your little boy called?" enquired Master Reginald Dudley.

"Donald M'Craw M'Dow is his name."

"And is she called Donald M'Craw, too?" demanded Master Dudley, pointing to Miss M'Dow, as she stood gazing at him in vulgar amazement, her clumsy shapeless figure, and broad plebeian face, contrasting themselves with the elegant graceful form, and high delicate features, of the young patrician.

"No, no—Donald's not a lady's name. She's called Marjory Muckle M'Dow. But, if you beat my boy in a name, I think he would have the best of it in a fight—he would make two of you, I can tell you.—Don't you think so, my dear?" To his lady.

"Oh, yes—our Donald's much stouter; I think Sandy is more of his make. But Patsy's the smallest of our children."

"She's very spirity, though!" said Mr M'Dow, in a tone of admiration.

"Yes, yes—she'll keep her own," responded his lady. "Does not Patsy sometimes get the better of Donald and you, Mysie?"

Here Miss M'Dow, who had been playing with one of the beautiful *Sévre* plates, let it fall, and it was broke to pieces.

"I hope she hasn't cut herself?" cried Mr M'Dow, in a voice of tender alarm.

Lady Waldegrave hastily rose, and the rest of the ladies were following her example, when Mr M'Dow said,—"I'm extremely anxious, Miss Malcolm, if it's not asking too great a favour, that you would remain a little with Mrs

M'Dow and me, while I communicate with Sir Reginald on the business that has brought me up at this time. It will soon be no secret—so it's just as well to speak out at once; and I always like to have the ladies on my side."

"But even if I were to be on your side, Mr M'Dow, I am very sure I can be of no service to you," said Edith, moving away, while Mrs M'Dow sat like a rock.

"At all events, I would take it extremely kind if you do me the favour to hear me tell my own story, as there will no doubt be many false statements made on the occasion; indeed, it has excited a great deal of animadversion already, I understand."

"Many people think I have influenced Mr M'Dow," said Mrs M'Dow, with great warmth and importance of manner. "But I am sure that was not the case, for, with Mr M'Dow's abilities, he needs nobody to direct him, I am sure." This was uttered in the peremptory manner of one who was well accustomed to lay down the law at home.

"Yes—yes, Mrs M'Dow has come in for her

share of what has been going; but, luckily, she's above minding those sort of clashes. No doubt, some of them have found their way to London, by this time?"

"I am quite ignorant to what you allude, Mr M'Dow," said Sir Reginald, now heartily sick of his guests. "If it is any matter of business, I beg you will apply to my law agents—they understand these things much better than I do. Besides, I am sorry a particular engagement calls me to town this morning." Mr M'Dow looked very blank at this information.

"So, you're going up to London this forenoon? I understood you had been settled here for the summer. But, however, I shall not detain you many minutes, Sir Reginald—a very few words will let you into the whole mystery." Then taking a long pinch of snuff and clearing his throat, he began,—

"As you, Sir Reginald and Miss Malcolm, have both had opportunities of judging for yourselves of my ministry, I shall not detain you by offering any explanation of my views on that head. All I shall say is this—That I have acted

throughout most conscientiously, and no man can do more."

Mr M'Dow paused, as if expecting a burst of applause to follow, but Sir Reginald was chafing with impatience; and Edith could only sigh to hear a man boast of his conscience, while it was yet in such a darkened state.

"It would be well if every body's conscience was like yours, Mr M'Dow," said his lady, warmly.

"It would be well if every one's conscience were enlightened by the Word of God," said Edith, mildly.

"I am sure that's true!" said Mrs M'Dow, taking the remark as a compliment.

"I can only impute the ill will with which I have been visited as proceeding almost entirely from ignorance," said Mr M'Dow, with affected meekness.

"There's more than that, Mr M'Dow," said his lady, with a toss of her head.

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr M'Dow, in a by-way of soothing manner, "whatever it is,

I bear them no ill will, I'm sure." Sir Reginald here pulled out his watch—" But not to detain you, Sir Reginald, I shall come to the point at once—the short and the long of the matter is this, I find my situation by no means so pleasant as it ought to be. The neighbourhood is sadly fallen off; since the death of my respected friend Glenroy, it has never been the same place to me.—(Mrs M'Dow, will you take Missy's hands out of the jeellie ?)—Then a mischievous spirit has got in amongst the people ; they are not satisfied with my ministry ; they cry out that I don't preach the gospel, and a great deal of nonsense of that kind ; in so much, that the very last time I preached, there were just seven people in the church, besides my own family and the precentor !"

" Its very true," said Mrs M'Dow, with inflamed cheeks ; " but a great deal of the mischief is owing to Mrs M'Taig, for Miss M'Tavish told me——"

" Whisht—whisht, Colly, my dear, it's not worth our while to mind what she said—the woman's a perfect enthusiast—but indeed they

are all tarred with the same stick—(O, my lamb, you mustn't drink out of the cream jug.)—However, as I was saying, Sir Reginald, it's not pleasant for a minister to be on such terms with his people—especially situated as we are at such a distance from genteel society—and I feel that even more upon Mrs M'Dow's account than my own, for she has always been used to a good deal of genteel company—and it's what she had a title to expect when she married me; for, like yourself, Sir Reginald, I was so fortunate as to be honoured by being the choice of a lady with a pretty considerable independence of her own, and of course she is entitled to more at my hands than if she had brought nothing along with her."

Sir Reginald here rose, and rang the bell violently, "Why is my carriage not ready?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Then enquire, and desire it to be brought immediately."

"Well, Sir Reginald, since you're in a hurry, I'll not detain you many minutes. You understand how matters are situated between me and my people—and you may conceive how little

satisfaction I can consequently have in the exercise of my ministry—that, together with the consideration due to Mrs M'Dow and my family, have made me entertain serious thoughts of throwing up my situation altogether."

"That's just what they want! I know Mrs M'Taig said to Mrs M'Kaig, before Miss M'-Tavish, that she hoped to skail the dooket yet—for that's what they call the manse—that set!"—and Mrs M'Dow waxed hotter and hotter.

"Oh, she's a vulgar ill-tongued woman, my dear, and we should be above minding her," said Mr M'Dow, with much majesty. "Now, as I was stating to you, Sir Reginald—My dear, will you take care that Mysic does no mischief," as the coarse paws were seen perambulating over the table as far as the thick blue arms would extend—"my wish is to withdraw myself from my present situation altogether. (Our little Missy's really taking a good look of you, Sir Reginald. Will you go to that gentleman's knee, my lambie? O, you're for *papaw's*. Then come away.) At the same time, although the stipend is small, it is always something, and I

should not like to throw it up unless I had something else secured to me. Now, I have lately learnt that there is a prospect of two professorships becoming vacant at no very remote period, either of which would suit me extremely well, and I think I'm fully qualified to discharge the duties of either: the one is the Humanity class, the other is that of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. If you would favour me with your interest on the occasion, I have little doubt but that, together with my testimonials and recommendations from other quarters, would ensure my appointment to one or other of these chairs."

"And I thought you was to speak about being made chaplain to the king too, Mr M'Dow," said his lady, briskly.

"Why, that's not so material a point at present, as I don't find there's any immediate prospect of a vacancy there. At the same time, I should be very well pleased that you could also have that in view, Sir Reginald."

"Sir, you have nothing to expect from my interest," said Sir Reginald, sternly; and, rising as he spoke, while the servant announced the

carriage, "I must wish you good morning." Then with a slight bow he quitted the room, but turned back, and taking Edith's hand, said, "I hope I shall find you here when I return." Edith merely bowed, and in another instant he was gone.

"Sir Reginald is very much altered," said Mr M'Dow, after a long and rather solemn pause. "He's not like the same person. I doubt he leads a hard life; and it's said he's over head and ears in debt already. In fact, if it had not been for your friend Captain Malcolm, who bought some of the finest wood at Glenroy, I believe there would not have been a stick standing."

"But the poor people!" exclaimed Edith, mournfully, "what will become of them?"

"Indeed, they're going to the mischief as fast as they can," said Mr M'Dow. "What with wild doctrines, absentees, and whisky, there's no dealing with them."

"Yet I hear good accounts of Mr Stuart's people from Inch Orran," said Edith; "that they are sober, peaceful, and industrious."

"There was outcry enough about the improvements there I can tell you, when they were first set agoing," said Mr M'Dow, evasively; "but, however, Mr Stewart makes himself a perfect slave amongst his people. I woud'nt lead the life he does for three times the money."

"Surely, Mr M'Dow," said Edith, earnestly, "it is incumbent upon every clergyman to labour diligently in his calling. If the poor ask nothing from you but the words of eternal life, and you disregard their cry !——"

"O, these were different times from the present," said Mr M'Dow, coolly.

"I'm surprised to hear any body speak in that way to Mr M'Dow," interrupted his lady warmly; "his sermons would stand the printing any day! but he's just thrown away where he is !" and Mrs M'Dow rose with a very angry face.

"It's a sore trial to one's patience," said Mr M'Dow, "to be preaching to a set of wretches that will not take the pains so much as to come and listen to what's said to them. How can you make any impression when that's the case?"

"By going to their houses," said Edith; "the

visit of a clergyman is always gratifying even to the worst of his flock."

"I don't think it's for a minister, with a young family of his own, to be going much amongst sick people," said Mrs M'Dow.

"Was not he a faithful pastor who said, 'I am as much in God's keeping in the sick man's chamber as my own?'" said Edith.

"Ay, ay, it's easy speaking," replied Mr M'Dow; "but the truth of the matter is, I really don't like to go to their houses—they're a dirty set, and I have an extremely delicate stomach."

Edith turned away in disgust.

"Stand still till I fasten your pelisse," said Mrs M'Dow, giving Mysie a shake; "and you must not take away that," trying to wrest from the reluctant grasp of Miss Mysie a cup which she had appropriated to herself, and which she set up a great roar at being forced to relinquish.

"Whisht, dear Mysie," cried the fond father; "you know you must not take away that; and it's not like a lady in a fine new pelisse to be crying that way. Such a grand pelisse too, and you've been so good till now! You know I'll

not bring you back again, my dawtie, if you greet that way—the fact is, I believe she's wearied, poor bit wifey! So, perhaps, we had as well be moving."

Edith was too much shocked and disgusted to ask them to prolong their visit; she sighed in bitterness of heart as she thought of the wide-spreading evil of even one worldly-minded and remiss clergyman, and of the awful responsibility those incur who appoint such to be the ministers of God!

"You'll make our apologies to her ladyship," said Mr M'Dow; "and I shall write my views more at large to Sir Reginald—it was unfortunate that he should happen to have been engaged, as the fact is, Mrs M'Dow and I had made up our minds to spend the day here; but I've no doubt he'll think better on the subject when he gives it a fair consideration."

Edith felt relieved when she saw the party drive off in a very gay carriage hired for the occasion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The day was now advanced, and Edith expected that when Lady Elizabeth should emerge from her apartment, it would be to take her departure; but instead of that, she received a message, requesting her to wait upon her ladyship in her dressing-room. Thither she repaired, and found her in her usual little, frivolous bustle.

"I sent for you, my dear, to say, that as I don't feel quite well this morning, I think I shall remain where I am; and I have just been writing a note to Monsieur Lamotte, to desire him to come hither. I must say it was very cross in Florinda to prevent my bringing him; and my poor, dear loves of dogs, it makes me wretched to think how they must be pining in my absence; but I really think the air of this place suits me better

than that of the cottage. To tell you the truth, I never liked a cottage; 'tis always unbecoming, and it was a mere matter of convenience my going there at all; but with my poor pittance, what could I do? However, I am now resolved to come to an understanding with my daughter, as I think it quite shameful that I should be starving on a miserable two thousand a-year, while she is living *en princesse*. I have seen a good deal, but I have never seen any thing to surpass the style of living here, and the extravagance of the whole establishment my maid tells me is excessive. Did you ever see such a house, such a table, such dress, such equipage—all perfect, to be sure—but the very perfection of extravagance?"

"I fear Lady Waldegrave will indeed bring herself into great difficulties," said Edith, "unless something can be done."

"Something *must* be done," said Lady Elizabeth, sharply. "It is absolutely impossible I can live in this country, upon the wretched sum allowed me; as it is, I have been obliged to contract debt which I must look to her for dis-

charging, and then let there be a proper allowance settled upon me. I mention all this to you, my dear, because I think you are the person to manage matters between Florinda and me; I have too much delicacy to enter on the subject myself, either with my daughter or her husband."

Edith almost sickened at this new developement of folly and misconduct; she saw the evils were far beyond her reach, and that all her attempts to stem the torrent which was advancing would be in vain.

"You must excuse me, Lady Elizabeth," she said, mildly, "from undertaking the office of adjusting your difference with Lady Waldegrave; if I could render you any service, I would most willingly do it; but I have reason to believe Lady Waldegrave is not in a condition to better your circumstances at present."

"The fact is, child, you know nothing at all about it," said her ladyship, angrily; "and I must find some one else who does; so I shall remain here for some days at least; during that time I shall endeavour to come to some arrange-

ment with my daughter. In the meantime, I must send the carriage for my physician." And she rang the bell to give her orders.

The thoughts of a prolonged stay in such a house, and under such circumstances, was most painful and embarrassing to Edith, and only one way appeared from which she could extricate herself from it. Lady Arabella Conway had repeatedly invited her to spend some time with her; and she had promised that if she could leave Lady Elizabeth before the Ribleys' return, she would do so. At any time, the performance of this promise would have been a pleasure to her, but doubly so on the present occasion. She therefore immediately made known her intentions to Lady Elizabeth, who, seeing she was not likely to be of use to her at present, gave her assent to the proposal.

Lady Waldegrave heard of her mother's extended visit, and Edith's proposed departure, with surprise and displeasure. "If mamma really has a cold, and will keep quietly in her room, it will be all very well," said she; "but in a few days, when those tiresome trades-people will have

made an end of their work, I expect my whole *corps dramatique*—and if her ladyship attempts to join it——" Here she gave a groan and a shrug, " And then it is so cruel in you, Edith, to desert me at such a time, when you might be useful to me in a thousand ways. In the first place, I am quite certain you could, if you would take the trouble, get mamma to assist me in my present difficulties. Indeed, if she does not, I do not know what I shall do—I am so pestered for money."

" And you are going to have a houseful of company?"

" Certainly—I must have company, and I must have amusement. I am already dying of *ennui.*"

" And yet you have every thing the world can bestow—rank, wealth—youth, beauty—the husband of your choice—a lovely boy. Ah, Florinda, since you find all these insufficient for your happiness, will you not seek it in still higher, better things?"

" Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't begin to preach!

or, if you will, pray reserve your sermon for Sir Reginald, who requires it much more than I do. In truth, Edith, you know nothing of the world; and I assure you, you greatly overrate my advantages. In the first place, my rank is next to nothing, and but for other accompaniments, I certainly should never have attained the consequence in society which I have done. Then as to my fortune, that is not half sufficient to enable me to keep pace with the people I live among. As for the 'husband of my choice,' you saw the humour he came home in last night—No—by-the-by *you* did not see it, as it was all reserved for me. But I shall not enter upon that subject at present. What I wish to say is, that before you leave me, I do wish you would sound mamma a little on money matters. If she would assist me with a thousand pounds or two, it would, I assure you, be a relief to me at present." Edith now ventured to hint to her the real state of the case with regard to Lady Elizabeth's finances; but Lady Waldegrave heard it with an incredulous smile.

" All that only tends to confirm me in my

belief that she is actually hoarding money," said she; "and indeed, it is scarcely possible it can be otherwise; for although she is for ever buying trumpery of some sort, yet the things she buys *are* such trumpery, that 'tis impossible she can spend her fortune in that way."

"So far from hoarding money, Lady Elizabeth assures me she is actually in want of it," said Edith.

"Pshaw, that must be absolute nonsense," said Lady Waldegrave, impatiently. "However, I see you don't know mamma, so you are no hand to deal with her, since you take for gospel all she says. I must get my steward to speak to her, though these sort of people are all so stupid and tiresome, I hate to have any thing to do with them. I hope you will prove a better actress than you are an agent, for I see you are really not *au fait* in that department. If you are resolved to go to-day, do pray return soon, as I wish to begin the rehearsals; and, *apropos*, do secure that handsome Mr Melcombe for me. I shall invite him as soon as the house is ready. Pray, tell him all this, and"——but here the

But here the entrance of visitors interrupted her ladyship before Edith could reply. The party consisted of some fashionable, and of course favourite, young men from town, and were hailed with delight by Lady Waldegrave, who was again all animation and seeming happiness. The Ladies Bingley made their appearance, and for the first time showed signs of animation.

In a little while Lady Arabella Conway was announced. She had received Edith's note, as she was stepping into her carriage, and had immediately driven to Woodlands, as she said, to carry off her prize. Edith was too sincere to attempt to return in kind the expressions of regret Lady Waldegrave then thought proper to utter at losing her, and she almost recoiled from the tender embrace that was bestowed upon her at parting. It was not till she found herself within the precincts of Oakley House, that her spirits revived, and she felt that she breathed a purer, better atmosphere.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Admiral Conway and Mr Melcombe were walking before the house, and a groom was in attendance with a led horse.

"So, you have left all the gaieties of Woodlands, to come and rusticate with us?" said the Admiral, as he welcomed Edith with all a sailor's cordiality. "After that, I forbid any man, woman, child, or animal, to quit my dominions while Miss Malcolm remains; we must all make common cause, to show our sense of the compliment she has paid us.—Parker,"—(to the groom,) —"Mr Melcombe's horse may be turned out to grass, for he won't require it for six weeks at least."

"There is no disputing such commands," said Mr Melcombe, with a smile; "so," addressing the servant, "I shall not want my horse to-day."

"No, nor to-morrow neither," said the Ad-

miral. Then turning to Edith—"Here have I been urging this gentleman to remain a week or two with us quietly here, to no purpose; but no sooner does a fair lady appear, than he knocks under at once. You see your influence, so make a good use of it—it will be all the stronger for being exercised, as my Arabella knows," said he, patting his lady on the shoulder with an air of good-humoured raillery.

"My influence must be so very small," said Edith, "that I suspect it can only serve as a sort of cat's-paw for your own power."

"What an invidious insinuation!" exclaimed the Admiral. "I appeal to you, Melcombe, if such is the case?"

"Not on the present occasion," said Mr Melcombe; and he coloured as he said it, as though he meant more than he expressed.

"That is spoken like an honest man," said the Admiral; "but, indeed, let women say as they will, we are, upon the whole, much more open and avowed in all our proceedings than they are—Don't you agree with me, Melcombe?"

Mr Melcombe was silent for a few moments, as if struggling with his emotion; then, in an agitated voice, replied, "Not in my own case"—then, as if he had said too much, he turned abruptly round and walked away.

A pause ensued, which Lady Arabella was the first to break: "Much as I admire both Mr Melcombe's character and manners," said she, "I confess there is a mystery about him, that (to say the least of it) is not pleasant."

"There is no mystery about his character," said the Admiral; "that is well known, and I'll venture to say, a braver and a better man does not exist. There are only two things I wish respecting him; the one is, that he belonged to the British navy; the other, that I had a spare daughter to bestow upon him."

"There is something so open,—so noble I may say,—in his countenance and air, that seems quite inconsistent with concealment; and yet he sedulously shuns all allusion not only to his family, but even to his birth-place, or connexions of any kind," said Lady Arabella.

"In short, you have just the besetting sin of

your sex, Bell; not satisfied with all you have heard, from good authority, of this young man's character and conduct, you must have the history of his parents—his mother's maiden name, of course, with a certificate of his birth and baptism. What the plague does it signify in what parish such a man was born?"

"I have never been able to discover even to what country he belongs," continued Lady Arabella. "His name is English, but his accent and pronunciation, though good, are not perfectly English. In short, Miss Malcolm," said she, smiling, "take an old woman's advice, and don't fall in love with him till you know more about him."

"I shall certainly follow your advice," replied Edith, in the same tone.

"And if I were a bonnie lass," said the Admiral, "and such a noble fellow came to court me, I should at once give him my hand, and say, if I could not sing,

'O yes, I will follow, I will sail the world over,
Nor think of my home, when I look at my lover.'"

Lady Arabella and Edith laughed at the Admiral's romantic ardour in his friend's cause.

"But I can tell you what," said the Admiral, "you need not trouble your heads about Mr Melcombe's heart; for, on my rallying him on that point to-day, he acknowledged to me, that his affections were engaged to one whom he had loved from childhood—there's constancy for you!"

Edith felt a little piqued at the Admiral's supposing the state of Mr Melcombe's affections could be of any consequence to her; and after a little more chat they separated to dress for dinner. The dinner party was increased by the arrival of some chance visitors, but Mr Melcombe contrived to place himself beside Edith at table, and, in spite of all her resolutions, her reserve gave way, and she found herself insensibly talking to him of Mrs Macaulcy, Glenroy, and Inch-Orran, as she would have done to an old friend. In reply to a question of Edith's, he acknowledged having been in the Highlands when a boy; but he evinced so much emotion at the interrogation, that she was

sorry she had put it, and immediately changed the conversation.

"Certainly some painful mystery attaches to this young man," she thought. "I wish I knew what it is, for he seems very amiable, and at times looks very melancholy."

CHAPTER XXV.

There is no surer mark of a selfish character, than that of shrinking from the truth. Even in its gentlest, mildest form, it comes an abhorred apparition to those, who, sunk in their own silken dreams, would keep their eyes closed against all the convictions of unpleasing reality. So it was with those whom Edith had tenderly sought to awaken to the knowledge of the simplest and most obvious of even worldly truths. Each disliked even the little she had done, although they were too much disunited to agree even on that point, or indeed to be aware of what had passed on either side. Edith was, however, no sufferer by the disgrace into which she had fallen, as she was allowed to remain for some days in uninterrupted tranquillity, and seldom did days pass away more pleasantly. Each brought its round

of religious duties—of benevolent actions—of tranquil pleasures, and rational enjoyments.

When there was no company, Mr Melcombe commonly read for an hour or two in the morning; and he possessed all the requisites for that most rare of all accomplishments, having a fine voice, a correct ear, quick perceptions, good taste, and perfect simplicity. A discussion one day arose as to the choice of a book from among those which lay scattered on the library table. Lady Arabella proposed the Life of Howard the Philanthropist; the Admiral wished to hear the Memoirs of Pepys—"For," said he, "the one will send us all to prison—the other will take us to court and the Admiralty, where we shall surely find ourselves in better company—what say you, Miss Malcolm?"

"I am rather inclined to go to prison with Howard, than to court with Pepys," replied Edith.

"Let us try both, and see whether the philanthropist or the courtier has the best of it," said Mr Melcombe; and he read a few passages from each alternately.

Extracts from the Diary of S. PEPYS, *and from the Journal of* HOWARD *the Philanthropist.*

PEPYS.

"This morning I put on my best black cloth suit, trimmed with scarlet ribbon, very neat, with my cloak lined with velvet, and a new beaver, which altogether is very noble."

HOWARD.

"Let it be my earnest enquiry, how I shall best serve God in the station which he has assigned me."

PEPYS.

"Thus I have ended this month with the greatest joy that ever I did any in my life, because I have spent the greatest part of it with abundance of joy and honour, and pleasant journeys, and brave entertainments, and without cost of money. Thus we end this month as I said, after the greatest glut of content that ever I had; only under some difficulty, because of the plague which grows mighty upon us—the last week being about 1700 or 1800 dead of the plague."

HOWARD.

"Ease, affluence, and honours, are tempta-

tions which the world holds out; but, remember, the fashion of this world passeth away. On the other hand, fatigue, poverty, suffering, and dangers, with an approving conscience—Oh, God! my heart is fixed trusting on Thee! *My God!* Oh, glorious words! *there* is a treasure, in comparison of which all things in this world are as dross."

PEPYS.

"Lord's Day. Up: and put on my coloured silk suit—very fine—and my new periwig, bought a good while since, but durst not wear, because the plague was in Westminster when I bought it; and it is a wonder what will be the fashion after the plague is done, as to periwigs, for nobody will dare to buy any hair, for fear of the infection, that it had been cut out off the heads of people dead of the plague."

HOWARD.

——— "I would look to the moral source from whence all evil and suffering have been derived, and should, at least, endeavour to diminish their bitterness. And, oh,—how should I bless God, if such a worm is made the instrument of alleviating the miseries of my fellow-

creatures, and to connect more strongly the social bond, by mutual exertions for mutual relief!"

PEPYS.

"To church, and heard a good sermon upon, —'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, and all things shall be added to you;' a very excellent and persuasive, good and moral sermon. He showed, like a wise man, that righteousness is a surer way of being rich, than sin and villainy."

HOWARD.

"Sunday Evening. Very desirous of returning with a right spirit, not only wiser, but better —a cheerful humility, a more general love and benevolence to my fellow-creatures- watchful of my thoughts, my words, my actions—resigned to the will of God, that I may walk with God, and lead a more useful and honourable life in this world."

PEPYS.

"Abroad with my wife, the first time that ever I rode in my own coach, which do make my heart rejoice, and praise God; and pray Him to bless it to me, and continue it."

HOWARD.

"Look forward, oh, my soul!—how low, how mean, how little is every thing but what has a view to the glorious world of light, life, and love! The preparation of the heart is of God. Prepare the heart, oh God! of thy unworthy creature—and unto Thee be all glory, through the boundless ages of eternity."

"What important lessons may be learned from reading these passages," said Lady Arabella. "Who could recognise in these characters the creation of the same divine mind?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Edith, with fervour, "who but must feel the contrast which they exhibit between the love of duty and the love of self? between the pure and exalted aspirations of Christian piety and benevolence, and the grovelling sentiments of mere worldly interest?"

"Why, surely no one will pretend to say these varieties of human nature are fair specimens of any two distinct classes in the world?" said the Admiral, who loved a little argument for its own sake. "At least if there be occa-

sionally a Howard, who in all the emergencies of life can raise his mind to the first great Cause, surely we have few or no Pepys' in these days of mental cultivation."

"That there are few Howards may be granted," said Melcombe; "but Pepys's character I fear is neither an antiquated nor an overcharged picture; his dialect may be out of fashion, as his dresses would now be, but his sentiments are those felt by all vain and vulgar minds to this day; and it must be the very truth and universality of their application which gives his Diary its chief interest."

"Ay, to be sure," said the Admiral, "I had forgot the breed of modern dandies, male and female, whose Sabbath-day thoughts, were they put in black and white, like poor Pepys's, would not be—'Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?' but how shall I most becomingly trick out and adorn my body, so as to excite the admiration and envy of my fellow creatures?

'Himself so much the source of his delight,
His Maker has no beauty in his sight,'

as your favourite Cowper says."

"And the mind of Cowper, awfully and mysteriously as it was occasionally eclipsed, still shone with a divine light, which has awakened and exalted the hearts of thousands of his fellow creatures," said Melcombe.

"But," said the Admiral, "if we could make a free choice, and form our own characters, could we hesitate, think you, in preferring the mind of a Howard to that of a Pepys?"

"That is entirely a supposititious question," replied Melcombe, "since we know that of the many millions of spirits called into this state of existence, there are none whose natural bias is not to evil. But He who gave to Howard the power of becoming a ministering spirit to all who required his sympathy and aid, and enlightened his mind with that divine love which communicates itself to all around—He, too, placed Pepys in this visible world, and surrounded him with like means of improvement; yet how strange and sad to read the transcript of his heart, in his Diary, filled as it is with disgusting frivolity and unfeeling levity! His ideas of God are scarcely worthy of a savage. Of moral

beauty he seems to have formed no conception; the sufferings of others he appears to have viewed with perfect indifference, and even with pleasure, if he were likely to gain any advantage by them. Surely, had his 'one talent,' such as it was, been well applied, he would have handed down to posterity a very different account of his stewardship from that which now stains his memory."

"I hope you don't mean to say, it is requisite we should all be Howards?" said the Admiral, somewhat testily.

"By no means," replied Melcombe, "at least not to the same extent, or in the same way; but I think each may be, and many doubtless are, Howards in their own sphere of action. Were it otherwise, some of our noblest faculties would have been given in vain, and must lie useless and unemployed."

"But how do you account for Pepys's constant flow of cheerfulness and contentment?" demanded the Admiral; "to all appearance he was a happier man than Howard?"

"I cannot dignify Pepys's inane selfish com-

placency with the name of happiness," replied Melcombe; "at least it must have been merely the happiness of an animal or an idiot; while Howard's must have been that of an angel or superior being. His tranquillity rested on principles which time would only confirm and enlarge, while the enjoyment of the other depended on mean trivial circumstances, which could yield no rational satisfaction, and which, consequently, must have been as perishable in its nature, as it was worthless in its results."

"Believe me, my good friend," said the Admiral, "your standard is too high; were all hearts laid as open as poor Pepys's, we should find thousands and tens of thousands of respectable well-behaved people every whit as bad, many much worse, and all believing themselves on the high road to heaven."

"That may be," said Melcombe; "for the scale of humanity rises by innumerable steps, from the lowest to the highest state; but surely the more our moral and intellectual powers are enlarged and improved in this stage of our existence, the higher will be our destiny hereafter;

for we can scarcely doubt that time and eternity are but different periods of the same state, requiring the same dispositions and faculties; and if so, who would not have lived and died a Howard, rather than a Pepys?"

"I like the notion of our retaining our identity," said Lady Arabella; "and to think that that many-coloured web called experience, which we weave here mingled with so many bitter tears, is to serve some purpose hereafter. I have always loved those verses of Gambold's, where this idea is finely expanded." And she rose, took down the volume, and read

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

"So many years I've seen the sun,
And call'd these eyes and hands my own;
A thousand little acts I've done,
And childhood have, and manhood known;
O what is life! and this dull round
To tread, why was a spirit bound?

"So many airy draughts and lines,
And warm excursions of the mind,
Have fill'd my soul with great designs,
While practice grovell'd far behind:
O what is thought! and where withdraw
The glories which my fancy saw?

"So many tender joys and woes
Have on my quivering soul had power;
Plain life with heightening passions rose,
The boast or burden of their hour:
O what is all we feel! why fled
Those pains and pleasures o'er my head?

"So many human souls divine,
So at one interview displayed,
Some oft and freely mix'd with mine,
In lasting bonds my heart have laid:
O what is friendship? why imprest
On my weak, wretched, dying breast?

"So many wondrous gleams of light,
And gentle ardours from above,
Have made me sit, like seraph bright,
Some moment on a throne of love:
O what is virtue! why had I,
Who am so low, a taste so high!

"Ere long, when sovereign wisdom wills,
My soul an unknown path shall tread,
And strangely leave, who strangely fills
This frame, and waft me to the dead.
O what is death! 'tis life's last shore,
Where vanities are vain no more;
Where all pursuits their goal obtain,
And life is all retouch'd again;
Where in their bright result shall rise
Thoughts, virtues, friendships, griefs, and joys."

"That is a very pleasing creed, and more especially at our time of day, Arabella," said

the Admiral; "for I should be sorry to think, that after having weathered it together these forty years, we should lose sight of each other for evermore when once we parted company. —Come now, lay aside your books and work, and get your cloaks and bonnets."

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the return of the little party from their walk, they found that Lady Waldegrave and Sir Reginald had been calling; at least so it was to be inferred from cards which had been left for each individual of the family. There was also a note to Edith, requesting of her to return to Woodlands the following day, as arrangements were now making for the theatricals, in which she was expected to bear a part. A *P.S.* expressed a hope that Mr Melcombe would likewise join the party, adding that a choice of two principal characters should be reserved for him as a mark of especial favour. When she had read the note, Edith presented it to Mr Melcombe. "I have no right to withhold an invitation," said she; "but I certainly wish Lady Waldegrave had conveyed this one through some other medium."

"Through no other medium could it have been so acceptable," he replied, as he took the note. "But even through it the invitation is not a gratifying one. I am sure I need scarcely ask what is your intention; but may I beg, that since Lady Waldegrave has done me the honour to insert my name in your invitation, you will oblige me by including me in your refusal?"

"You shall ride there with me to-morrow, and make your own excuse," said the Admiral: "we have been rather remiss in our duties in that quarter."

"I must beg to be excused from that also," said Mr Melcombe.

"Why so?" enquired the Admiral; "Sir Reginald left a card for you, and his lady invites you to the house in any character you choose—What more would you have?"

"Sir Reginald could not intend to call upon *me*," said Mr Melcombe, with peculiar emphasis, and colouring deeply; "but, at any rate, it is not for me to return the visit at present—the time will come, I trust, when——" He stopped, and seemed to repress the words which were already on his lips.

"When what?" asked the Admiral bluntly.

Mr Melcombe's eyes were cast down, as if in meditation, while his varying expression testified that it was of no tranquil kind; but the momentary cloud passed from his brow, and, looking up, he said, "When Sir Reginald and I may meet upon more equal terms than we can do at present."

"I begin to think you are really a strange fellow, Melcombe," said the Admiral, gravely.

"In other words, a suspicious character," said Melcombe, forcing a smile.

"No, no; there are no suspicions as to either your character or circumstances; both are open as noon-day: but still I don't know what to make of you."

Mr Melcombe was silent for a few seconds—he then said, in a calm but melancholy tone, "Think of me as one whom a single rash, imprudent, but I may add, guiltless act, has divested of home, friends, and country; but, believe me when I say, the time is not far distant when I may again claim them all."

"And all, I doubt not, will be ready to claim

you, my dear fellow," said the kind old Admiral, shaking his friend's hand most heartily—" so do as you like; only I can't allow you such latitude as Lady Waldegrave does, for I can only wish you to remain with us in one character, and that one your own."

" I know not how it is," said Lady Arabella to Edith, as they passed into the adjoining room, " but of late Mr Melcombe has shown a degree of sensitiveness as to his situation, which I never observed before. Since we have been acquainted with him, he never dropt the slightest hint that could lead us to suppose he was other than what he seems."

Edith could not solve the mystery, but she felt more and more interested in one whose whole bearing and deportment raised him far above suspicion. It was impossible for her not to be aware, that Mr Melcombe regarded her with no ordinary degree of interest; and she could therefore only retain her original supposition, that they had previously met, but somehow connected with circumstances too painful to be even adverted to.

In spite of the Admiral's remonstrances, Mr Melcombe persisted in going to town the following day, but under promise of a speedy return; and the ladies, with their veteran, set off to Woodlands.

They must have been nice observers who could have detected any thing amiss beneath the smiling surface, that there met their view. All around, within and without, breathed only of pleasure—pleasure in its fairest, most seductive form; the young, the noble, the beautiful, seemingly happy in themselves and each other, and amidst all the charms of nature and the refinements of art. No unpleasing thought or corroding care was visible in Lady Waldegrave's countenance, which was all gaiety and delight—but it was the gaiety and delight of a mind under the influence of excitement, and closed for the time against conviction or feeling. She was surrounded by a little band of admirers, who seemed to vie with each other in paying homage, and offering up incense at her shrine.

"I am delighted to see you, dear Lady Arabella," said she, in her sweetest of false manners,

"and thank you for having brought back our runaway," embracing Edith as she spoke.

"You are giving me credit I do not deserve," said Lady Arabella, "as I assure you I have no design of parting with her; and even if you had my consent, you would find it no easy matter to obtain Admiral Conway's."

"O, *apropos*, Sir Reginald will of course be in the billiard-room, I must let him know Admiral Conway is here," said Lady Waldegrave. —Then turning to Edith, she enquired, in a low but significant tone, "Has a certain Mr Melcombe nothing to answer for in detaining you from us?"

Edith coloured as she replied, "There was no occasion for any one to give advice on a subject on which my own mind was made up from the first."

"It was only for the ballet you were required," said Lady Waldegrave, carelessly; "but if you look upon dancing as one of the seven deadly sins, I should be sorry you committed it to oblige me;" and she turned contemptuously away.

When people are disposed to ridicule, 'tis in

vain to attempt to enter into any explanation with them; Edith, therefore, suffered the sarcasm to pass without contradiction.

Lady Elizabeth now entered from an adjoining apartment, and, having welcomed the Admiral and Lady Arabella, and conversed for a little with them, she next fastened, as usual, upon Edith.

"I hope you are come to remain with us, my dear," said she, "for I have much to say to you."

"I have engaged to remain with Lady Arabella until you return to the cottage," said Edith; "and, to judge from appearances, there is no want of company here."

"Why, there is, to be sure, a mob of people—rather too many, indeed; but I don't know how it is, every one is employed in their own way—and, in short—but come this way—let us go into the veranda, where we shall be quiet. You see how wonderfully well I am—indeed, I feel quite restored—quite renovated; Lord Milberry said to me yesterday, I had got *le teint reposé comme à quinze ans.*"

Edith could with truth say, she was happy to see that her ladyship looked better; and the lady went on, "It is particularly fortunate that I should have regained my looks at this time, as I have a little plan in contemplation, the success of which will depend very materially upon my appearance. You are aware, I suppose, of Florinda's intention of having a French play and ballet performed here next week. I should have been happy to take a part in the play; but really the labour of getting by heart I found would be too much for me—in fact, I cannot take the trouble to commit any thing to memory—then the fatigue of dancing in the ballet is more than I am yet able for—indeed, the very thoughts of it made Florinda, poor dear, quite wretched—so I gave that up also—but something is expected of me on the occasion."

"Nothing more, I am sure," said Edith, "than that you should be a pleased spectator."

"You are quite mistaken," said her ladyship, with an air of displeasure; "any body may be that, but *I* must be something more—I am expected to show off—it is the tax always levied

on talented persons; in fact, we are public property." Edith saw remonstrance would be vain, so she remained silent. "However, as I cannot undertake the drudgery of the play, and am not equal to the exertion required in the ballet, I have devised a little interlude for myself, which I think will have a charming effect. I intend to come upon the stage in a little car, as a—a—in short, as Venus, with little Dudley in my lap, as Cupid, in a flesh-coloured silk dress and silver wings. My own dress I have not determined upon; but I think of having it *couleur de soupir, étouffé*; that, you know, will be appropriate, and I shall sing *Ecco d'Amor il Tempio*. The design is pretty—don't you think so?"

Edith felt as if she could both laugh and cry at the idea of this preposterous exhibition, and she said something about Lady Waldegrave not approving of it.

"O, as to that, the whole is to be kept a profound secret from Florinda, and to be quite a charming surprise to her. You must therefore promise me not to breathe a syllable of it to any body; indeed, had I not entertained a very high

opinion of your prudence and good taste, I should not have let you into my secret."

Edith would fain have tried to open the infatuated old woman's eyes to the folly and degradation of making herself a spectacle for the finger of scorn to point at; but her gentle remonstrances were like the sweet south blowing, not on a bank of violets, but of nettles. Lady Elizabeth cut them short with much asperity. At that moment she heard Sir Reginald's voice enquiring for her, and in another instant he was by her side in the veranda. His air and manner were at first a little embarrassed, but he soon regained his self-possession, and, expressing his pleasure at again seeing her there, he added a hope that she had come to remain with them. Edith could only repeat what she had before said on that subject.

Sir Reginald looked displeased, then said, "You pay your relations a bad compliment, certainly, in preferring the society of strangers to theirs, or there must be something very attractive at Oakley."

"O, by-the-by!" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth,

"that puts me in mind of what had almost escaped me—a little rumour I heard yesterday, about you and a Mr—what is his name—only a little flirtation perhaps—eh?"

Edith blushed, and the consciousness she had done so, and that Sir Reginald's eyes were fixed upon her in deep scrutiny, increased her confusion. She then replied, "I am ignorant of any rumours you could have heard relating to me—certainly none which could be at all interesting either to myself or others, if they were founded in truth."

"It is better," said Sir Reginald, "when there is no occasion given for rumours, either true or false."

Edith made no reply, but motioned to Lady Elizabeth to re-enter the drawing-room; and in spite of Sir Reginald's attempt to detain her, she rejoined the party she had quitted.

Lady Elizabeth was in such spirits at the thoughts of the brilliant success that awaited her, that she continued to chatter away without intermission, while Lady Waldegrave whispered, smiled, and flirted, with the loungers who

surrounded her. Sir Reginald conversed with the Admiral, but his air was abstracted, and in the midst of all that was gay and brilliant, his animation seemed forced and joyless. The visit was indeed productive of little pleasure to any of the party, and Lady Arabella availed herself of the privilege of fashion, to make it a short one. When taking leave, the Admiral, as if recollecting himself, said, " By-the-by, I believe I ought to apologize to you, Sir Reginald, for my friend, Mr Melcombe; he is gone to town this morning."

Sir Reginald slightly bowed in acknowledgement, while he said, " I am not aware, Admiral, that any apology is due to me, as I have not the honour of Mr Melcombe's acquaintance."

" I beg your pardon, Sir Reginald," said the Admiral, in his usual straightforward manner, " but I understood you had left a card for my friend, at the same time you called upon me."

Sir Reginald turned on Lady Waldegrave a look of enquiry, which changed to one of displeasure, as she said with affected carelessness, " I believe a card was left for Mr Melcombe.

If report says true," she added, with a malicious smile, to Edith, "he is likely to prove more to us than a mere visiting acquaintance."

"Perhaps your ladyship is in Mr Melcombe's confidence," said the Admiral, "and can tell us the name of the fair lady who has been able to fix even a roving sailor's affections from childhood?"

"No," said Lady Waldegrave, haughtily; "Mr Melcombe and his *liaisons* are alike unknown to me."

Lady Arabella saw a blunt retort ready to burst from the Admiral, and hastened to put a stop to all recrimination, by taking leave. Lady Elizabeth again whispered secrecy to Edith, as she embraced her at parting. Lady Waldegrave's manner continued cold and pettish, and Sir Reginald, as he handed her into the carriage, uttered a half-angry, half-sorrowful remonstrance against her for not remaining with them. But homeless as she was, Edith would have preferred any species of dependence to the gilded snares of folly she there saw spread around.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The following day, as Edith sat alone in the drawing-room, Mr Melcombe entered. His appearance was so unexpected at the moment, that she coloured a little with surprise, as she met his salutation. He, too, at first appeared somewhat embarrassed, but quickly regaining his self-possession, he advanced to the table at which she was sitting.

" I dare scarcely hope for a welcome after so short an absence," said he, as he extended his hand to her, with something of hesitation in his manner.

" It would be a bad compliment to say, that absence enhanced any one's value," replied Edith, with a smile, as she shook hands with him.

" Even if it did, it would be paying almost

too great a price," said he, and he fixed his eyes on her with a look and meaning she could not misunderstand; "but," he added, "I flatter myself I may claim a welcome from you, when I tell you, I have seen your old friend, Mrs Macauley."

"Have you indeed been to visit Mrs Macauley?" exclaimed Edith, with glad surprise. "Ah, how kind! is she well and happy as usual?"

"Perfectly so; and I am charged with many affectionate remembrances to you, and apologies for not having answered your last letter, as she has been even more than usually occupied of late."

"Doing good, and giving pleasure to all around her," said Edith. "Oh, how I long to see her! I have never been so long separated from her; and I fear, at her advanced age, such a change of life and habits, such a total deprivation of all the comforts she has been accustomed to must be severely felt."

"Do not be uneasy on her account," said Mr Melcombe; "she looks almost as well and happy as she did at Glenroy."

"You remember her then at Glenroy?" exclaimed Edith; but she was sorry she had yielded to the surprise of the moment, when she beheld the agitation Mr Melcombe evinced at being thus reminded of what appeared to have been an involuntary acknowledgment. An awkward pause followed, and while confusion was still visible on the countenances of both, Sir Reginald Malcolm was announced.

At that moment, Edith would have felt the presence of almost any one else a relief, but the sight of Sir Reginald only augmented her embarrassment. She, however, named Mr Melcombe and him to each other; but she was struck with the manner in which the introduction was taken by both parties. On the part of Sir Reginald, was an air of haughty scrutiny, which was met on that of Melcombe with a glow that mounted almost to his temples; and his eyes, which for an instant flashed fire, were then hastily averted, as though he both felt and feared the interrogation. Neither spoke—but the bearing of both denoted that sort of instinctive repugnance, for which it is sometimes impossible to account. With

Melcombe, however, the emotion was of a transient nature, and soon his countenance regained its wonted expression; but the cloud did not pass so quickly from Sir Reginald's brow. Edith expressed her regret that the Admiral and Lady Arabella should be from home, having gone to pay a visit of condolence to an old friend in the neighbourhood.

"I met them as I came hither," replied Sir Reginald, "and I learnt from them that I should find you alone, and *disengaged*." He pronounced the last word with marked emphasis.

"A few minutes ago, I was both," said Edith.

"And I was so fortunate as to find you so," said Mr Melcombe. At the sound of his voice, Sir Reginald turned quickly round, and regarded him for a moment with a look which seemed to say, "Who are you, sir?" and again it was met by the rising colour and embarrassed air of one to whom the interrogation was painful. Edith felt the situation of both parties was unpleasant; but she regained her self-possession, and said, "Mr Melcombe had just arrived from town, and when you entered, I was engaged in

hearing of my dear old friend Mrs Macauley, whom he has been kindly visiting."

"I cannot claim much merit on that score," said Melcombe; "there is something so delightful in the sunshine of her heart, 'tis a pleasure to come within its influence."

Sir Reginald made no reply, but again cast a haughty, scrutinizing glance at Mr Melcombe, which was evidently intended to silence him; but his embarrassment had fled, and it was now met by a look perfectly open and unshrinking, and there was something so noble in the stamp of the countenance, as seemed to denote that it never had quailed—never would quail—for the fear of man. Sir Reginald turned away his proud gaze, and abruptly addressing Edith, said, "I beg a few minutes' conversation with you. I wish to see you alone."

Surprised, and somewhat piqued at the haughty, peremptory manner in which this request was made, Edith hesitated to comply; but as she marked Mr Melcombe's rising colour, and Sir Reginald's flashing eye, she hastily rose, and led the way into the small drawing-room.

For a few seconds, Sir Reginald was silent, as if striving to regain his self-command; he then said, in a tone of assumed calmness, " May I beg to know who this gentleman—this Mr (or as some call him) *Captain* Melcombe is, to whom I have had the honour of being introduced?"

" He is the friend of Admiral Conway," replied Edith.

" And nothing more?" demanded Sir Reginald, in the same restrained tone.

" That is surely sufficient to entitle him to civility from Admiral Conway's visitors," said Edith, coldly.

" In some circumstances it might be so; but I would know something more of this person —this *Captain* Melcombe. I would know who and what he is?" Edith was silent. Sir Reginald went on, still preserving his forced composure. " Although Admiral Conway may be imprudent enough to invite an adventurer to his house, you must permit me to say, Edith, it by no means follows as a matter of course that you ought to be drawn into an intimacy with a person of that description."

"While I remain under the roof of Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway, I shall certainly not shun holding intercourse with their friends," replied Edith, mildly but firmly.

"The Conways would show a greater consideration for you if they were more chary in their friendships," said Sir Reginald, with asperity.

"Excuse me, Sir Reginald," said Edith; "but I have met with too much kindness from them to suffer them to be blamed, and especially on my account. I never can be injured by having their friends for my acquaintance."

"Yet you are aware that your name is already coupled with this adventurer's! Is that not injuring you?" cried Sir Reginald, now losing his self-command. Edith's colour rose; but ere she could reply, he proceeded with increasing vehemence—"As your nearest relation, I conceive myself entitled to ascertain the truth or the falsehood of this report."

"In no capacity whatever can I admit your right to interfere in my affairs," said Edith, rising with an air of displeasure, but he laid his hand upon her arm to prevent her leaving the room.

"Then do you refuse me the satisfaction of being able to contradict a report discreditable to yourself and your family?" said he, vehemently.

"I refuse to acknowledge the authority of Sir Reginald Malcolm to demand any explanation from me," said Edith, roused beyond her usual meek endurance.

"Then I shall seek an explanation elsewhere," cried Sir Reginald, passionately.

At this threat Edith's resolution failed her; she turned pale with apprehension at the thoughts of what might ensue, were he to encounter Mr Melcombe in the present irritated state of his feelings. "There is no one who can give any explanation," said she faintly. "There is none to give."

"Thanks, dear Edith; that is enough!" he cried, with a look of pleasure, as he pressed her hand. "And you forgive me—you forgive the solicitude that the enquiry"——

"I forgive every thing," said Edith, "and every one; but I must consider the liberty you have taken as unjustifiable on your part, as it was unwished for on mine. And now let us part."

But Sir Reginald still held her hand, while he looked earnestly upon her. "I know you are truth itself, Edith," said he. "I am satisfied the rumour was as false as it was malicious; but"—and his eyes flashed fire—"but I see plainly that unknown—that adventurer dares to love you! There is degradation in the very thought of your ever casting yourself away upon such a one. Promise, then, that you never will be his!"

Edith's whole face was in a glow, and for some minutes she was too much confused to reply. Sir Reginald's eyes were bent keenly upon her, and his lips were compressed, as if to restrain the workings of his breast. But soon regaining her self-possession, she replied, with calmness and dignity, "There is no subject which could be proposed on which I would bind myself by a promise to any one,—certainly not to Sir Reginald Malcolm." And she again rose to quit the room.

"But tell me," said he, still detaining her, "why did you quit Woodlands so hurriedly? Did Lady Waldegrave—Was it in consequence of any thing she said?"

"You can scarcely suppose, Sir Reginald,

that your house and Lady Waldegrave's would have been the residence I should have made choice of," said Edith.

"But since you were there, why leave it so abruptly?"

"I went, at Lady Waldegrave's earnest solicitation, to spend *one* day with her."

"And you would not remain another to gratify me? Ah, Edith, if you but knew the hundredth part of the misery I endure!"

"Why should it be so?" said Edith earnestly; "you have all that this world can give!"

Sir Reginald's only answer was a deep sigh, and an impatient wave of the head.

"Ah, Reginald, since you do not find your happiness in the follies—must I say in the vices—of the world, as no one ever did, will you not seek it in other and better sources,—your home—your child—your country—your God?" and she looked on him with eyes of almost seraph's purity and softness.

Sir Reginald's lip quivered with emotion, and for some moments he remained silent, as if struggling with himself. He then exclaimed, "I wish you would talk to Lady Waldegrave on

these subjects—it is there the reform should begin. By Heaven, her caprice and extravagance would beggar a kingdom!"

"But, were she to see you giving up any of your favourite pursuits——"

"That would make no difference; or, if it did, it would only be to afford her still greater scope for her heartless folly."

"At least the experiment is worth trying," said Edith.

"Excuse me," he replied, impatiently; "but women cannot possibly judge of those things. They may be of use to one another in the way of advice, and if you will take up your residence with us, I am convinced you might be of service to Florinda—if any thing can be of service to one so selfish and hollow. Do, then, let me persuade you to come to us."

"No, Sir Reginald, that can never be," said Edith, calmly and firmly; "from my heart, I wish Lady Waldegrave and you all happiness—I would do much to promote it if I could, but the means seem beyond my reach."

"Happiness! Ah, Edith, you little know when you talk of happiness to me! There was

a time, indeed, when my happiness was in your hands; and had you borne with me a little longer, had you made a little more allowance for the folly and infatuation of a mere boyish fancy, we might both have been happier now!"

A slight blush tinged Edith's cheek, but there was no uncertain expression in her eyes, as she raised them to his with a look, grave and mild, but full of pity, while she said, "On my own account, I have no regret, and I never will listen to yours. As the friend and brother of my brother—as the successor to my father—as my nearest kinsman,—in all these relations I shall ever be interested in your welfare, but in no other may you ever lay claim to my sympathy."

There was a dignity in her manner that debarred all farther discussion; and Sir Reginald made no attempt to detain her, as she returned to the room they had left, but followed with an air of haughty pique and mortification. Scarcely deigning to notice Mr Melcombe, he took leave, and in an instant his horse's feet were heard galloping down the avenue.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SCENE such as this could not fail to disturb the serenity of Edith's mind; but yet, amidst the painful emotions which had been excited, there was one of a more pleasurable kind. Sir Reginald had said that Melcombe loved her, though that could not be, for his affections it seemed had long been riveted on another, while hers had been too cruelly blighted ever again to revive. No—love it could not be on either side, but it might be something better and more enduring. She admired Mr Melcombe's character, and was pleased with his society; his sentiments on most subjects agreed with hers; their tastes and pursuits were similar; and it was therefore but natural that he should evince a degree of preference for her, which one unacquainted with the

real state of the parties might mistake for love. Thus argued Edith, as she repeated to herself the words which had called forth this train of reflections. But even while she repelled the idea, it nevertheless operated on her feelings, and when she again joined him, the ease and simplicity of her manners had given place to an air of timidity and embarrassment, which he could not fail to perceive.

"Well," said the Admiral on his return, addressing Edith, "you have had no lack of beaux in my absence, it seems; here is one," pointing to Mr Melcombe, "who has found his way to you, and we met another, whom I allowed to pass, after stipulating with him that he should not run away with you in my absence; if he did, I promised him a hot chase from myself, and my captain, when he should return." Edith's head was bent over her embroidery, and the Admiral went rattling on. "You had just come in the nick of time, Melcombe, to protect our fair prize," said he; "otherwise I suspect she would have been carried off by a gay rover. Confess," cried he, turning to Edith, "that Sir Reginald came with some such nefarious design?"

" Not absolutely," said Edith, trying to force a smile, " I was only pressed to return to Woodlands, by my cousin."

" But you told him, I hope, that you preferred the company of an old couple and an absent lover," laying his hand on Mr Melcombe's shoulder, as he sat in pensive abstraction, " to all the gay doings at Woodlands?"

Edith coloured as she thought of Reginald's ideal suggestion, when Mr Melcombe said in a peculiar tone, " Not *absent*, only clouded."

" That is a nice distinction, I suspect, in your case, my good friend," said the Admiral; " but we shan't differ about a word. Was this your first introduction to Sir Reginald?"

" Not my first," replied Melcombe, with some hesitation; " but it is many years since we met."

" Many years!" repeated the Admiral, laughing; " neither of you have been many years in the world, according to my mode of reckoning. Pray, may I ask, what you call many years ago?"

" Thirteen years—and many, many years they have appeared to me!" answered Melcombe, with a sigh.

"If he had known Reginald thirteen years ago, he must have known me too," thought Edith; for at that time Reginald and she were inseparable; and she gazed with wonder and enquiry.

"Why, to be sure," said the Admiral, "thirteen years must be a respectable portion of your life; but, as your old Scotch song says,

'Should auld acquaintance be forgot,'

I hope Sir Reginald and you renewed your acquaintance?"

"No," replied Melcombe, "Sir Reginald did not recognize me."

"That is not surprising," said Edith; "for I, too, must have known Mr Melcombe in those childish days, as my cousin and I were educated together."

"On some minds early impressions are faint and evanescent," replied Mr Melcombe, evidently evading the enquiry; "on others, they are vivid and indelible;" and, as he spoke, his eyes were directed to Edith with a look of such deep and tender interest, as seemed to speak of thoughts linked with many a fond recollection.

"Don't be too secure of the indelibility of certain childish impressions," said the Admiral, with a significant look and an expressive tone.

"I thank you for your caution," replied Melcombe with a smile, "but I think I may venture to feel secure of sentiments which have stood the test of time and absence, and which every day tends only to strengthen and confirm," and again his look seemed unconsciously bent on Edith.

"What say you to the volatility or the indelibility of early impressions, Miss Malcolm?" said the Admiral; "Are they fugitives or fixtures, think you?"

"The impressions made in childhood are certainly very strong," said Edith; "but as the mind matures, it surely becomes our duty to examine them by a better light than that of nature, and to discard or retain them, according as we find them worthy of a place in our affections."

"You are a little philosopher," cried the Admiral, "and I should fear you never would fall in love, were it not for that sweet blush of yours; but philosophy never blushes."

" I may well blush at being styled a philosopher," said Edith, with a smile.

" I suspect it is I who ought rather to do so, for having likened you to any thing so odious as a female philosopher," said the Admiral; " but you must spare a poor old weather-beaten tar—and here comes Arabella—she will be jealous if she hears of all this blushing between us."

" Indeed, I have some reason," said Lady Arabella, as she joined them; " for I assure you, Miss Malcolm, the Admiral was so afraid of your cousin's carrying you off in his absence, that I could scarcely prevent him from returning to guard you himself; but, with a gouty foot and a shattered arm, I think he would scarcely have been able to cope with so gallant a knight as Sir Reginald.—I hope you did not find it a service of great danger, Mr Melcombe?"

" Had there been danger, I should certainly have welcomed it in such a cause," replied he; " but my trials were rather those of passive endurance than of active enterprise."

Again Edith read, in the expression of his clear, eloquent eye, a meaning beyond the words

he uttered. Strange disjointed thoughts again came thronging upon her—"he loves one known from childhood," she thought, "and to-day he has all but acknowledged that he knew me in early life."

But in another instant she rejected the wild idea, with shame at ever having harboured it, and something of displeasure that the lover of another should thus presume to make it doubtful whether she was not the object of his secret affections. These reflections rendered her silent and abstracted during the rest of the conversation. From that time she studiously avoided all opportunities of being alone with Mr Melcombe, and would even have shortened her visit to Lady Arabella, had she known where to go. But situated as she was, she had no alternative but to remain where she was. The return of the Ribleys was very uncertain, Mrs Ribley having been taken ill at Cheltenham, and their stay having, consequently, been prolonged.

Lady Elizabeth's movements were too eccentric to be depended upon; and Mrs Macauley was still in requisition in the various capacities

of sick-nurse, governess, housekeeper, and universal favourite, in the little crowded, comfortless abode of the wise Johnnie.

Such being the position of all parties, there was nothing for it but to acquiesce in the present arrangement of things. Mr Melcombe appeared to feel the change which had taken place; but though he looked thoughtful and melancholy, he made no attempt to win her back to the easy, friendly footing they had hitherto been upon. His attentions, if more guarded, however, seemed even more devoted than before; and in spite of the reserve of both, there still seemed as if a secret, though invisible, chord of sympathy bound their minds together.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The invitation to Woodlands was again repeated, and again declined, in mild but decisive terms. Edith, therefore, flattered herself she should be allowed to remain, for some time at least, in the repose of neglect. But repose is not the element in which the idle and frivolous can exist themselves, or allow others to indulge in.

The day preceding Lady Waldegrave's *fête*, Edith received a summons from Lady Elizabeth to repair immediately to the cottage. She was at no loss to conjecture that the impending *éclaircissement* between the mother and daughter had at last taken place, and had terminated, as she expected, in a violent *fracas*. The Admiral and Lady Arabella, alarmed at the thoughts of being deprived of their young favourite, proposed, that

in case Lady Elizabeth had actually quitted Woodlands, she should be invited to take up her residence with them; and Edith promised to use her influence in prevailing upon her step-mother to consent. Lady Arabella and Mr Melcombe accompanied her till within sight of the cottage, when the former turned back a few steps to speak to one of the gardeners. Edith was slowly retracing her steps to rejoin her friend, when Melcombe, in a hesitating tone, and with a heightened colour, said, "Were it not very presumptuous in me either to hope or fear aught on my own account as connected with you, I should say, I fear this interruption will prove only the prelude to a longer separation."

"I should have cause to grieve at any thing that was to separate me from such kind and delightful friends as the Admiral and Lady Arabella," replied Edith; "but there seems no likelihood of that at present.

"But even should you remain—I must depart—I must return to Greece for a short time," said Melcombe, earnestly; "and should this be my only opportunity of seeing you alone,

may I hope—forgive me"—said he in increasing agitation—"forgive me if I venture to hope, that even amid doubts and suspicion, we know and understand each other better than when we met?"

Edith was spared the embarrassment of reply, as they were at that moment joined by Lady Arabella, who, after repeating her invitation for Lady Elizabeth, called upon her reluctant companion to retrace his steps, and the little party separated.

Edith found Lady Elizabeth in her dressing-room, extended on a couch—her physician and attendants bustling around her, and the atmosphere loaded with the fumes of hartshorn, ether, and such mental drugs as are usually supposed to minister to a mind, rather than a body diseased. The paroxysm, however, appeared to be past, as she accosted Edith in her usual weak, querulous tone, and having embraced her in a faint, hysterical manner, she dismissed her attendants, and began—"You find me excessively ill—my whole system has received a shock which only the greatest skill and care will enable me

to surmount—nothing affects the looks so much as agitation, and before this happened, I was looking so particularly well!" Here her ladyship applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and heaved repeated sighs.

"I trust nothing of a very serious nature has occurred?" said Edith, soothingly.

"Shocking!" was the reply, with a little hysterical sob. "In fact, the usage I have met with—but my nerves are so shattered I shall never be able to speak of it!" And the small sighs now rose to little half-repressed shrieks.

"Then do not attempt to talk of it, dear Lady Elizabeth," said Edith, in the same bland tone.

"Not attempt to talk of it!" exclaimed her ladyship, taking the handkerchief from her face, in a sudden transport of indignation. "I shall make a point of talking of it—the world shall hear of it! Such ingratitude! Such—I—I—it is too shocking and foolish!"

By way of turning her mind from a subject which seemed too much for it, Edith here delivered the kind messages with which she had been charged by the Admiral, and Lady Arabella;

but they were received with peevish contempt. "Don't talk about Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway at present," said she; "they cannot be of the slightest service to me, after the indignity I have met with. I can listen to nothing of the sort. To be so treated by my own daughter, who owes every thing to me! Though, poor dear unfortunate, it is all owing to that unprincipled man. I always knew it would be so! But, to dare to refuse me!" Here a little hysterical laugh wound up the sentence.

"Pardon me, if I venture to guess at the cause of this disagreement between you and Lady Waldegrave," said Edith, gently; "and still more, if I take upon me to assure you, it is not at present in her power to assist you."

"Assist me!" repeated her ladyship, with indignation. "You strangely mistake the matter. I required no assistance; on the contrary, my intention was to have assisted her."

"Undoubtedly there is some mistake," said Edith.

"There was much improper behaviour—much ingratitude—and—and folly—but no mistake!"

"Excuse me, if I still think there must be something misunderstood between Lady Waldegrave and you," said Edith. "I have reason to be assured, that any assistance you could afford her would be most acceptable."

"Why, so I thought, and most people would think; but it has been refused, in the most insulting manner." And her whole frame quivered with indignation as she spoke.

Edith felt more and more perplexed.

"I fear you will think me very troublesome in thus presuming to press my opinion on you," said she; "but from what passed between Lady Waldegrave and me on the subject, I am certain there must be a misunderstanding on one side or other; it is very lately that she urged me to endeavour to procure your assistance to relieve her in her present embarrassments."

"That is just of a piece with the rest of her behaviour," exclaimed Lady Elizabeth; "such duplicity! I was certain that she must desire it; it would have been ridiculous to suppose I would be otherwise than an acquisition to her;

and I had spared no expense—every thing had been prepared in the most perfect taste—my car, my doves, my wings—all so purely classical!"

Here a convulsive sob choked her utterance. Edith was confounded. At first she thought wounded affection and mortified vanity had actually turned her brain, till the recollection of the *fête*, and the great things destined for it, flashed upon her memory, and the whole mystery was unravelled. But what an exhibition of human folly! it was almost too humiliating to be ridiculous! Lady Elizabeth went on.

"Conceive my feelings, after having been at so much trouble and expense, to be told that she could not possibly allow such an exhibition to take place. An exhibition! what a word! shocking and foolish! And such ingratitude, when I had been at the expense of getting a dress for her child—quite a beautiful thing, flesh-coloured silk, with the sweetest little silver wings! altogether the whole device was charming, and the effect would have been irresistible; but the fact is, I believe Florinda is jealous of the success which she foresaw would attend my little inter-

lude. But am I for that reason to remain a cipher—to suffer my talents to lie useless? I consider it due to myself to make an appearance upon this occasion, and I told Florinda, that unless I was to have my own way, and appear in a manner worthy of myself, I should instantly quit the house. The consequence is, you sèe me here!" Emotion choked farther utterance.

Of all mental sufferings, perhaps the most difficult to administer relief to by honest means, are those which spring from wounded vanity. The only panacea for a weak, vain mind, in a state of irritation, is flattery, and that was one which Edith would in no circumstances have applied. She sought, however, to soothe the angry feelings of her stepmother into composure, and then to reconcile her to her disappointment, by such arguments as she thought best suited to her capacity. But the attempts were fruitless; the lady would listen to nothing but her own wrongs. When in the midst of one of her angry bursts, she suddenly stopped, and exclaimed, "Now that you understand how matters are between my daughter and me, the

only way in which you can be of use is, to go to her immediately, and endeavour to bring her to a sense of her duty before it is too late. I am still willing to forgive her, upon receiving a proper apology, and being invited—for I now must insist upon being *invited* to act my part. I shall order my carriage for you, for there is not a moment to lose."

She was ringing the bell, when Edith stopped her,—" Pray, excuse me, Lady Elizabeth," said she, " but I cannot really undertake this office; at least, take a little time to consider of it, and allow me the same !"

" Not one instant !" exclaimed her ladyship vehemently; " it must be done now, or not at all."

" But it is late," answered Edith, " and the Admiral and Lady Arabella are in hopes of seeing you return with me. They expect no company, so you will find a quiet, family party."

" The thing of all others I detest !" exclaimed the lady peevishly. " I detest family dinners, and I detest cottages, which are, in fact, neither more nor less than small, dull, inconvenient

houses; and if the Conways imagine I am to remain mewed up in this baby-house, they are much mistaken; so let me hear no more of the Conways and their dinners, but go directly to my daughter!" again ringing the bell violently for the carriage.

"Dear Lady Elizabeth," said Edith, earnestly, "it pains me to refuse any request of yours, but, indeed, I cannot go to Lady Waldegrave on such an errand. I would do much to reconcile you, but I think with her, that the appearance you propose to make would be unbecoming her mother—the grandmother of her child—my father's widow."

Lady Elizabeth turned almost blue with anger, while she repeated, "Grandmothers and widows! coarse and gross! Who ever hears of such things in good society? Such terms are never used by those who understand good manners," and a little hysterical laugh rattled in her throat. She, however, quickly rallied, and went on: "However, since I *am*, it seems, your father's widow, (certainly not what confers distinction upon me,) you will allow, I hope, that I am entitled to

claim the obedience of his daughter, and therefore I *command* you to go immediately to Lady Waldegrave—or even to her husband—and—and represent to them how excessively ill I have been treated by them, and that I desire I may be invited to return and sustain my part, otherwise I insist upon my car, doves, and wings, being sent to me immediately; and then they shall see what it is to have incurred my displeasure."

Vexed as Edith was, she could not refrain from smiling at the mock dignity with which this tirade was delivered. Unwilling to accede to this preposterous request, or rather command, but afraid of the consequences of a refusal, in compassion to the wretched old woman, she at last undertook the painful, because almost hopeless task, of acting as mediator between her and her daughter. She was not allowed much time to deliberate, for the carriage had been ordered even before her consent had been asked, and she was hurried away upon her embassy.

CHAPTER XXX.

It had occurred to Edith, that the only way in which it would be possible to reconcile parties, would be for Lady Waldegrave to give up, or at least postpone, her theatricals—a small sacrifice, she thought, when put in comparison with even a foolish mother's displeasure. On reaching Woodlands, however, her hopes became more faint when she perceived the bustle and excitement which pervaded the whole establishment. Ladies' maids, with important faces and consequential airs, were seen hurrying to and fro, their hands full of flowers, feathers, and drapery—sounds of many voices were heard declaiming, and repeating their parts in some of the rooms—in others, the tones of various instruments were heard, and a half-open door disclosed a troop of dancers practising for the ballet.

Upon being conducted to Lady Waldegrave, Edith found her not less occupied than her guests, she rehearsing her part with Lord Herbert, while one of the Ladies Bingley acted as prompter. When Miss Malcolm was announced, she uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and hastened forward to receive her with more than her usual suavity and softness of address. "This is so kind of you, my love!" said she, tenderly embracing her; "so *very* kind! I almost feared you would not come, and yet I thought you could not resist, when you knew the cruel dilemma I am in."

"It was in hopes of extricating you from it I came," replied Edith.

Lady Waldegrave pressed her hand. "Dearest Edith! how very kind and affectionate! Indeed, I cannot express how much I feel obliged to you. I *always* was set upon having you, though you were so coy, and difficult to win; but, however, since we have secured you, that is enough."

"You mistake, Lady Waldegrave; I do not come on my own account."

"Oh no, not at all—you come upon mine."

"The purpose for which I have come," said Edith——

"You could only come for one purpose, I am sure," interrupted her ladyship, sportively; "the purpose of obliging me beyond expectation; when that is done, we shall then talk of other purposes—of wise and good purposes, such as I often, very often, intend to follow, and shall, I am sure, some day or other begin to practise under your auspices; *en attendant*, you will put yourself under mine for this one day. Was it not really too much, that of my principal *figurantes*, Lady Sophia Marley should have sprained her ancle, and Miss Townshend's provoking old grandmother have chosen to die? so there are two frightful gaps in my *corps de ballet*; but you will—I know you will, kindly fill one of them."

"Excuse me," said Edith, gravely; "I came for a very different purpose—I came at the request of Lady Elizabeth."

Lady Waldegrave's countenance changed—"What! has mamma been teazing you already with her absurdities? I thought you had been at

the Conways. I sent a note there to you this morning."

Edith explained to her that she had been sent for by Lady Elizabeth, and described the state in which she found her; but Lady Waldegrave would scarcely hear her to an end—"Really this is too tiresome!" cried she, impatiently. "Surely you might know mamma better than to pay any regard to such *scênes;* and if she *will* be ridiculous, it is surely better that she should be so in her own dressing-room, than in the face of the whole world. Nothing will induce me to permit her to make such an exhibition. It might have passed at the Court of Louis Quatorze, when antiquated Venuses were quite *à la mode;* but in the present day, such an outrage against good taste is not to be endured!"

Edith gave a gentle assent as to the impropriety of the exhibition, then, as delicately as she could, conveyed Lady Elizabeth's message; and added, "that surely something might be done to deprecate her displeasure and conciliate her."

"O, after the thing is over it will be time

enough to do that," replied her ladyship carelessly.

"But Lady Elizabeth declares she is determined to go abroad immediately, unless you make some concession to her," said Edith.

"That is perhaps the very best thing she can do," replied Lady Waldegrave, in the same tone of indifference.

"But if she goes now, she leaves you in anger —Ah, Florinda, can you bear to live under a parent's displeasure? Will you not rather sacrifice the amusement which is the cause of this strife—relinquish your theatrical representation, and recall your mother to your house?"

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Lady Waldegrave, angrily. "I can scarcely suppose you serious in making such a proposal, and I really have no leisure at present for *persiflage*."

"Indeed I am serious," said Edith, gravely.

"Pshaw, that must be all make-believe. I know you would make a good actress; so, pray, put off your bonnet, and I will introduce you to the ball-room, where my *corps de ballet* are now practising. Now, do dispense with all the lack-

a-daisical, missyish, can'ts and won'ts, and in-deeds, and so forth, and I shall take them all for granted, for my moments are very precious."

Edith saw that all hopes of touching a heart so seared by selfishness and folly were vain. She therefore relinquished the attempt, and calmly but firmly assured Lady Waldegrave, it would be in vain to urge her to take a part in any theatrical representation. Lady Waldegrave coloured with displeasure as she said, "Yet you can obstinately refuse to gratify me in so trifling a matter, while you expect I should sacrifice my own amusement, and that of my friends, for the unreasonable whim of another?"

"It is *duty* that makes the difference," said Edith, gently.

"Rather our opinion of what our duties are," replied Lady Waldegrave. "I consider it my duty to make my house agreeable to my friends, and to prevent mamma from making herself ridiculous.—I also think it my duty to learn my part, Lord Herbert," said she, addressing the intended lover of the piece.

"And it is mine to see that you get it by heart—Is it not?" said he with a smile.

Edith rose to take leave, and, as she quitted the room, felt it a relief to return even to Lady Elizabeth and her cottage.

The unsuccessful result of her embassy called forth a fresh burst of indignation from Lady Elizabeth, which was still farther increased when, upon demanding her car, doves, and wings, Edith was obliged to confess she had wholly forgotten to enquire into their fate. Another messenger was immediately despatched, with orders not to return without them, as, with the true spirit of a little, vindictive mind, she seemed wretched at the idea of any one else profiting by her misfortunes. In the prospect of disappointing any such design, she became more reconciled to her own discomfiture, and at length seemed to experience positive pleasure in the thoughts of the consternation that she flattered herself her sudden flight would occasion.

"And now we must talk of our arrangements," said she; "I have ordered my people to have every thing ready to set off to-morrow.

I am sorry, my dear, I must leave you behind, as I really cannot take you comfortably with me; besides, girls are rather an incumbrance abroad; but when I am settled myself, I shall not forget you. I shall endeavour to find *un bon parti* for you, and I think I shall succeed; but should I fail in that, you know you have always the resource of a convent, where you will have the very best society, so much better than living with *bourgeois* relations. In the mean time, you must remain with me till I take my departure, for I have a thousand matters to arrange."

CHAPTER XXXI.

As Lady Elizabeth's night was day, and her day night, Edith had the undisturbed enjoyment of the morning to herself. She therefore availed herself of the opportunity of collecting the drawings and papers which she had previously left at the Cottage, and was so employed when Mr Melcombe was announced. Her writing-case and porte-feuille were open before her, and part of their contents were scattered promiscuously on the table at which she was seated. She rose to receive him, but there was something of mutual constraint and embarrassment in the meeting. After the usual common-place salutations and enquiries had been exchanged, Mr Melcombe said, as if to deprecate her coldness,—"I fear I have been guilty of an intrusion at this early hour; but if I have, you must forgive me."

"Why should you fear, and why *must* I forgive you?" enquired Edith, with a smile.

"Because, when there is much to hope, there is always something to fear."

"There is little room for either, in this case," replied Edith, slightly.

"It is only indifference that would exclude hope or fear," said he, looking earnestly at her.

"From any thing so indifferent in its nature as a morning visit, they surely may be excluded," answered Edith; "though I believe we are all apt to expend our hopes and fears even in the issue of 'to be—or not to be' at home."

"The issue of even so trifling an event may, however, be important." He paused, then added, "But even if I should have trespassed, I think you will forgive me, when I tell you the offence is not likely to be soon repeated; and when next we meet, I trust I shall be in different circumstances from those in which you have hitherto known me."

His voice betrayed his emotion, and Edith was immediately struck with the thought that he alluded to his marriage with the object of his

early affection. A strange sensation oppressed her. It might be that the difference of her own fate struck her forcibly, when contrasted with the more favoured destiny of another. Yet, was he indeed true to his early vows, or had she been unconsciously supplanting another? Her heart shrunk within her at the dread surmise. Alternately her cheek glowed with shame at the idea that she was the self-deluded sport of an imaginary attachment, and turned pale at the thought that perfidy and falsehood could dwell in such a mind. All this was the work of a moment, but she remained silent for some minutes; then making an effort to regain her self-possession, she said, "It is seldom, that after a long separation, people meet under the same circumstances: the change in yours, I trust, will be a happy one."

"Yes, the change that will restore an unknown exile to his family and country must be a happy one," said he, in a voice faltering with emotion. "That will entitle him to do—what as a friendless unknown adventurer he dares not—to seek the regard of one long, and truly, and fondly loved."

There was no mistaking the tone and the look which accompanied the words; these declared the secrets of a heart too noble for dissimulation. Yet Edith strove to repel the thought that she could be the object of his love; and, while a deep blush mantled her cheek, she said, "Is she then not aware of the constancy of your attachment?"

"*Now* I hope she is," replied he; "and that even in absence, and under doubts and suspicions, she will believe that a time will come when all will be cleared up. Would she be wrong in granting me this much of hope?"

"I cannot tell," said Edith faintly; and she would have withdrawn the hand he had taken.

"Ah, do not say so!" cried he earnestly, as he still retained it.

"I cannot judge for another," said Edith, in increasing confusion.

"No, not for another—for yourself!"

"And she so long and truly loved?"—said Edith, in tones scarcely audible.

"It is she whom I now ask, only to believe that one day I may aspire to her regard—when the mystery which now excludes me from her

sympathy is disclosed. Is this asking too much ?" he said, in deep agitation.

"No," said Edith, in a low faltering voice.

"That is enough," he exclaimed, as a glow of pleasure lighted up his countenance. "In the midst of dear approving friends, then, you will acknowledge me ?"

On the table which stood before them some drawings lay scattered; and as Edith, in confusion, turned her eyes from the deep earnest gaze which was fixed upon her, they fell upon a view of Inch Orran by sunset—the parting gift of Lucy. Beneath were written these words from Ossian—

> "My soul is full of other times;
> The joy of my youth returns."

"There," said she, in emotion, "is the dear home where, ere long, I hope to be."

"Inch Orran!" exclaimed Melcombe, in a tone that thrilled to her heart. She started, and turned upon him a look of anxious enquiry, but his eyes were fixed on the drawing. Why should the simple pronouncing of a name conjure up visions of the past? Why should a tone

—the tone of a stranger's voice—thus suddenly recall the past, the lost, the loved of other times to him unknown? These feelings were depicted on Edith's countenance as she continued to gaze in breathless suspense.

Struck with her paleness, and the intense interest expressed in her countenance, he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and said, with assumed calmness, "That scene, once viewed, can never be forgotten. It was on such an evening I last beheld it," added he, and his voice quivered as he spoke, while his eyes were again riveted on the drawing. With an impulse, for which she could not account, Edith took from her writing-box a miniature of Mrs Malcolm; it had been painted soon after Ronald's departure, and had been destined for him; but subsequent events had defeated the intention, and the picture had been given to her. She now, with a feeling for which she could not have found a name, with a trembling hand placed the picture before him, while she said,—"There is the picture of the only mother I ever knew. Was she, too, known to you?"

For a moment he gazed upon it with a look of the most passionate fondness;—tears filled his eyes, but still he continued to gaze. Then shading his brow with his hand, as if to conceal his weakness, the tears forced their way through the fingers, vainly spread to hide them. Struggling to repress emotions too powerful to be restrained, he leant his head on the table, while his whole frame betrayed the agitation of his mind, and spoke those voiceless feelings with which his heart seemed panting.

As Edith beheld this overpowering emotion, a thousand wild, vague, bewildering fancies floated through her brain—looks, and tones, and words, that told of the lost, the dead, came thronging upon her in a strange confusion mingling with the present—the living——. Stronger and stronger, the visions crowded on her brain —she felt as if reason was forsaking her: with the paleness of death on her brow, and eyes which seemed as if bursting from their sockets, she started up, and exclaimed, "Who—oh—in mercy tell me, who——" Her gaze was fixed on him with an expression of fearful scrutiny; but

her pale lips were unable to utter more. Her lover's agitation was almost equal to her own; words seemed to be struggling for utterance, while yet by a mighty effort he restrained them. At length, in a voice of deep, yet subdued emotion, he said, " Edith, I have not deceived you, can you trust me?"

" Oh, you know not what you are doing!" she exclaimed, as she withdrew her hands wildly from his; " you know not—the dark—the wild —the *impossible* things I fancy," and she gasped as she spoke, and drew shuddering away.

" Edith, dearest Edith, believe, only believe that I am true; and that nothing is impossible!"

"What! not that the seas should give up their dead?" cried she, frantically.

" Not their dead!—But, Edith, do not—oh, do not tempt me thus to break a vow—rashly, perhaps impiously taken, but which I hold sacred —in a little while—a few short months, the time will come—dearest—most beloved—my first— my only love—say that you will yet trust me— and then—and then let us part!"

For some minutes Edith could not speak, but at length restored to composure by the anguish which clouded his brow, she faintly articulated, "I will!—I do!"

"At Inch Orran, then, let us meet. There let me find you—there let me claim you."

Edith faintly breathed a single word—a name which had ever lain cherished in her heart.

"Yours, and only yours—dearest Edith, by whatever name—to all else—dead—forgotten"—

"Oh, not forgotten," cried Edith, bursting into tears; "still—still loved and mourned!"——

"Edith, I conjure you, tempt me not—make not the error of my youth to bring down perjury and dishonour upon me now—you have said you would trust me—may I not trust you?"

In a moment Edith conquered her tremors—her tears were arrested in their course—she did not speak; but the look with which she gave him her hand needed not words to attest her resolution. Melcombe pressed it to his lips, and tore himself away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

How like a dream, a vision of the night, did this brief and passing scene appear to Edith!—Again and again she asked herself, Could it be that the lost, the lamented, had thus, as it were, started into life—that the loved companion of her childish days was now the chosen of her matured affections? And these affections, had they been lightly transferred—could affections, once so blighted as hers had been, ever again revive, and own a second spring? Was it indeed love that she now owned and felt? Oh, how different from that which had cast its dazzling and delusive glare over her young imagination, and tinged so many of the radiant years of youth with colours fair, 'tis true, but fading as the tints of the rainbow!

Love had formerly been a sentiment—a false,

narrow, exclusive sentiment—shared only by the object which inspired it; now, it was a noble, generous, diffusive principle, which glowed in her heart, and sought to impart a portion of its own blessedness around. She had loved Reginald, as she could have loved any thing that fancy had painted to her as fair and fascinating. She had invested him with every noble and generous attribute which the young and imaginative so lavishly bestow on those they love. But the illusion had long since been dispelled, never again to gather over her heart. Again she loved, but by a light which could not deceive; by that divine light which taught her not to love the mere perishing idol of life's passing hour, but the immortal being, with whose soul her own might joy to claim kindred throughout eternity. And the dear ones who still mourned his loss— Oh, theirs would be rapture almost to agony! But she dared not allow her thoughts to dwell on such a theme.

It was long ere her spirits were sufficiently tranquillized to admit of her returning to the frivolous being with whom she was still associated,

but from whom she was soon to part, most probably for ever. With her own heart overflowing with love and gratitude to the Divine Disposer of events, fain would she have sought to impart to another of His creatures a portion of that heavenly-mindedness which was the fountain of her own happiness. But Lady Elizabeth rejected with horror, as something that savoured of Methodism and enthusiasm, the slightest allusion to any thing of a sacred nature, when spoken out of church, and preferred the indulgence of her own disturbed fancy—as it painted to her, pleasures and triumphs that might have been hers—to all the peculiar treasures of wisdom and peace which could be offered to her.

The day was far advanced ere she made her appearance, if possible, in increased ill humour. As she dawdled over her *déjeuner à la fourchette*, suddenly the sound of horses' feet, at full speed, was heard advancing; and as Edith raised her eyes, she caught a glimpse of one of Lady Waldegrave's grooms, as he galloped past the window, his horse in a foam. He stopped at the principal entrance, and presently a loud,

unsteady, ominous-sounding knock was heard at the hall door.

"Who—what is that?" cried Lady Elizabeth.

"I think it is a messenger from Woodlands," said Edith.

"Ah! but he comes too late. I will listen to no apology now—the time is past." And at that moment the butler entered with consternation on his face.

"An express from Woodlands, my lady."

"Well, what then?" demanded his lady, peevishly.

"Sir Reginald has been badly hurt, my lady."

"Badly hurt!" repeated she, much in the same tone.

"Yes, my lady—wounded."

"Wounded!—how very unpleasant—how was it—where? Edith, do you hear that?" Edith did hear, but, pale and panic-struck, she was unable to articulate.

"The ball has not been extracted, my lady."

"A ball!—Good Heaven, how shocking! I am quite overcome!—How dreadful!—Do call Monsieur Lamotte.—I shall certainly faint!"

"Lady Waldegrave is in great distress, my lady."

Edith waited to hear no more, but, quitting the apartment as Monsieur Lamotte entered, she hastened to find the servant, and learn from himself what had actually taken place; but the man seemed too much stunned and surprised to be able to give a clear account of what had happened. What he did relate, however, was sufficiently tragical and appalling. Sir Reginald had fought that morning with Lord Herbert, and been brought home severely wounded. The report of his death had circulated among his creditors, and executions were already in the house. Lady Waldegrave was in fits, and left almost alone, the party having dispersed.

Such was the amount of the intelligence with which Edith returned to the breakfast-table.

"This is too shocking—much too shocking!" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth, in one of her hysterical tremors—"what *is* to be done?"

"Had we not best go to Woodlands immediately?" replied Edith, who, though trembling with horror, remained calm and collected.

"Why, yes—perhaps so—and yet what *can* I do now? Had I been in the house, as I ought to have been, it would have been very different; but now I can do nothing, the time is past"——

"Oh, no—do not say so," cried Edith; "this is the time to be of use to Lady Waldegrave, now when she is in affliction.—Oh, surely you will go to her!"

"Why, considering how I have been treated" —said her ladyship, with asperity.

"Ah, do not think of that at such a time," interrupted Edith, with emotion.

"It is the most inconvenient time for me that could possibly be!" replied her ladyship sharply. "At the very moment when I was setting off—my nerves so shook too with what has passed! —How in the world did it happen?"

"I cannot tell," cried Edith; "I only know Sir Reginald has fought, and been wounded, perhaps dying," added she, bursting into tears.

"Shocking and foolish! 'tis too much—and an execution in the house! that surely might have been prevented?"

"Let us still try what may be done—Oh, let us hasten to Woodlands!"

"Have patience, child!—How is it possible for me, situated as I am—And what am I to do after I am there?"

"Then suffer me to go—allow me to order the carriage."

"Why, that is certainly very inconvenient for me—but, however, I suppose I must give up thoughts of going to-day—at least I shall not decide upon any thing till your return. So, pray, make haste—Tell Florinda how excessively I have been shocked. And, by-the-by, I shall send my physician to poor Sir Reginald—Monsieur Lamotte will accompany you."

But Edith had learnt from the servant that there was abundance of medical assistance already provided; she therefore declined the attendance of Monsieur Lamotte, and the carriage having been quickly got ready, she threw herself into it—every consideration absorbed in generous sympathy for those she was so earnest to befriend.

How changed was the scene that awaited her at Woodlands, from that which she had witnessed not many hours before! Then all had been sunshine, and gaiety, and melody; now the

day was chill and dull; the velvet lawn and beauteous flower-beds were already defaced and trodden down; carts were loading in front of the house; the broad flight of steps was strewed with every description of furniture and valuables; the beautiful vases, filled with the choicest exotics, had been overturned or broken in pieces, and their fragments lay mingled with the cherished plants that had graced them; grim, scowling, hardened-looking men, were pushing and swearing at one another, as they each laid claim to some article of value, and their loud execrations and tumultuous din were still worse than the silent mementos of ruin which lay scattered around. The hall, lately filled with the fairest works of Italy, now presented a similar scene of devastation. The public rooms were fast dismantling; Lady Waldegrave's *suite* had already been despoiled of its treasures. Shuddering at this painful spectacle, Edith, after some delay, got one of the housemaids to conduct her to Lady Waldegrave. As she passed along, she met one of the surgeons coming from Sir Reginald's apartment, and she was relieved to hear

from him that the wound was not considered dangerous; that the ball, which had entered the fleshy part of the shoulder, had been safely extracted. The only danger now to be dreaded, was from the agitation of mind occasioned by the distressing scenes that were passing, and which it was impossible wholly to conceal from his knowledge. With a heart lightened of half its cares for the wretched fate of one who had been so dear to her, Edith followed her guide, shuddering with horror at the scenes of ferocious pillage she every where encountered. At length, in a chamber in the attics, she found the refuge of the hapless mistress of all this splendid ruin!

Lady Waldegrave was extended on the bed, perfectly calm, as if from exhaustion, but with misery and despair impressed on every feature. On Edith's entrance she half opened her eyes, but immediately closed them, as if determined neither to notice nor be noticed. Edith, however, approached the bed, and taking the hand which lay almost powerless by her, pressed it in hers; still Lady Waldegrave remained immovable.

Edith was silent for some minutes. At length she said, " I have come on Lady Elizabeth's account as well as my own; she charged me to express to you her sorrow on this occasion.'' Lady Waldegrave made no reply. " She will come to you, I am sure, if you wish it," resumed Edith; but she received no answer. " In the meantime, if I can be of any service to you"——

" Oh, those horrid sounds!" exclaimed Lady Waldegrave, shrieking, and burying her face in her pillow, as a volley of abuse and imprecations ascended from beneath her window. " Will no one save me from this?" and wild hysterical sobs shook her frame.

" I fear it is impossible," said Edith, soothingly; " distressing as it is—do try to bear it!"

" Is there nobody to assist me? nobody to drive away these people—these robbers—they have seized even my jewels!" she exclaimed, casting her eyes up to Heaven, as if in appeal.

" This is indeed a trial, painful for you to endure," said Edith, in the same gentle tone; " but distressing as it is, there is still comfort in

the midst of it; what a consolation to know that Sir Reginald's wound is not dangerous!" Lady Waldegrave waved her head with a gesture of impatience. "Ah, Florinda, think what it might have been to himself; what he might have inflicted on another, and thank God it is no worse!"

"He could have done nothing worse than he has done," exclaimed she, passionately; "he has been the ruin of my happiness, of my fortune, of my reputation—his very name is my abhorrence!"

Edith's blood ran cold—"Oh, Florinda, in mercy do not talk thus! remember, he is your husband—the father of your child!"

"And has been the ruin of myself and my child, by his madness—but do not mention him."

Edith feared there was guilt, no less than folly in the case, or at least imprudence bordering upon guilt; and she said in a faltering voice,—"I am ignorant of the cause of this unhappy *rencontre*."

Lady Waldegrave's colour rose—"Then 'tis well you should remain so—But no, that cannot be: you will hear a thousand lies, and you will

perhaps believe them all, as some other of my friends have done, and like them you will desert me in the time of need."

"No," said Edith, "happen what may, I will not desert you in your present situation."

Again Lady Waldegrave's colour deepened, while, with a rising at her throat, she said, "What! not even if you should be told that my husband fought to avenge his honour?"

Edith became pale as death, and for some minutes she was unable to articulate. At length, in a low voice of deep emotion, she said, "Not even then could I forsake you in the hour of need."

For a moment Lady Waldegrave appeared slightly touched, then in increasing confusion she went on: "The world had chosen to give me Lord Herbert as a lover. I need not tell you who know me, and had opportunities of judging for yourself, that it was a mere idle or malicious rumour, such as are circulated in thousands every day, and which nobody pays any regard to; but having drank too much wine, or lost too much money; or, in short, I cannot tell how—

but in a moment of delirium Sir Reginald thought proper to become jealous, and to insult Lord Herbert; the consequence was, it was necessary they should go out this morning; judge then whether I have not cause of resentment?"

"I cannot judge," said Edith, faintly; "God only can judge—but if you are innocent"——

"Can you doubt it?" interrupted Lady Waldegrave, indignantly.

"At least there must have been imprudence to justify the suspicion of guilt," said Edith.

"I am no hypocrite—I never studied appearances."

"Then, since conscious of your innocence, you can more easily forgive Sir Reginald, if the imprudence has been his," said Edith.

"You know not what I have to forgive!" cried Lady Waldegrave, passionately; "when brought home, even in presence of my servants, he ordered me from his sight. Can I forgive such an insult as that?"

"Forgive all, as you hope to be forgiven," said Edith.

"Do not talk to me any more of this horrid

affair, for Heaven's sake; but tell me what I shall do; how I shall get away from these dreadful scenes."

"Sir Reginald cannot be removed," said Edith; "surely then you will not leave the house while he is in it?"

"To what purpose should I remain?" cried Lady Waldegrave, impatiently.

"To be near him," replied Edith.

"What! after having suffered so great an indignity?"

"Yes, assuredly; he must have suffered, he is still suffering, much on your account; his state must still be precarious"——

"Pshaw—nonsense—the wound is a mere nothing—Dr Smith told me so himself."

"But the agitation of his mind may render it dangerous; should it prove so, (as who can tell?) and if, in the prospect of danger, he should wish to see you once more, to exchange forgiveness—Ah, Florinda, could you ever forgive yourself, if you had forsaken your husband's dying bed?"

"But how is it possible for me to remain in this wretched state?" she exclaimed, giving way

to a violent burst of selfish sorrow as she cast her eyes around the room.

" This apartment is quite comfortable," said Edith; " and if you will allow me, I will share it with you while you remain: But, oh! do not think of quitting the house while your husband is in it. If, as you say, your reputation is at stake, surely even on that account you are better here than you could be elsewhere."

That consideration seemed to have some weight, and at length Edith prevailed. She, therefore, sent back the carriage to Lady Elizabeth, with a note to prepare her for what she had to encounter, and a request that she would lose no time in coming to her daughter; then, with all the ardour and sweetness of Christian charity, she devoted herself to the task she had undertaken, of supporting the wretched being thus thrown upon her compassion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALTHOUGH Lady Waldegrave had expressed a wish that her mother should come to her, yet no sooner did she hear of her arrival, than it was apparent it had only been for the sake of appearances she had desired her presence. "For Heaven's sake, do not suffer mamma to talk to me," cried she to Edith; "it will kill me if she does—I cannot be tortured with questions; I shall go distracted if she talks of what has passed."

But the duel, its causes and consequences, had made slight impression on Lady Elizabeth's mind, in comparison of the execution and its effects; these, together with her own injuries and distresses, affected her so much, that some time elapsed before she was sufficiently com-

posed to be conducted to her daughter. For some time, sobs and broken exclamations were all the conversation.

"My poor, dear Florinda!" exclaimed she, in hysterical emotion—"Good Heavens! how shocking! But you know I told you, you certainly would be punished for your undutiful behaviour towards me. Not that I blamed you, my sweetest. And all those charming pictures, and marbles—shocking!—and that mosaic-table, which I *did* covet—it quite kills me to think of it. I foresaw this marriage would be your ruin, my darling; but we won't talk of it. How sadly you must have been shook by all this! Dr Smith assures me, a wound in the shoulder is nothing; but you look very ill yourself, my dear, quite *abimée*—and I have had a wretched night. Only conceive how very inconvenient—such a *contretemps!*—every thing was packed up, and, in fact, I was just setting off for the continent when I received the provoking intelligence—but I have put off my departure for a few days, that I may see you tolerably comfortable before I go. I am happy you have got dear, good Edith; she will,

I am sure, do every thing for you. But it is dreadful remaining here—Surely, my dear, you will leave this dreadful place?"

"I know not where to go," said Lady Waldegrave, despairingly.

"How foolish, my dear, to talk so! Can't you go to town?"

"And find things worse, if possible, than even here," replied Lady Waldegrave in the same tone.

"Shocking! Well, go any where; to an hotel—to—to—in short, you can be at no loss; but, *à propos*, what was the cause of that horrid affair? how was it? Lord Herbert is the best-natured man in the world."

"Some foolish quarrel about anything, or nothing," cried Lady Waldegrave. "But pray, mamma, don't remain in this scene of horrors; it makes me wretched to see you—it does, indeed."

"'Tis indeed very sad, and Monsieur Lamotte was quite opposed to my coming; but I said I was determined, whatever it might cost, to make a point of seeing you. I knew it would do

you good, and that I should feel more comfortable; for, you know, there are such absurd things said upon these occasions. My maid told me this morning, the talk in the neighbourhood was, that you had actually gone off with Lord Herbert —shocking and foolish! that Sir Reginald had pursued you, and fought; and, in short, I can't tell you what ridiculous things are said; but it is quite a comfort to me to see you so well, although you do look pale. But surely those odious people will be obliged to replace every thing? And, *à propos*, they can have no right whatever to my car and doves, and I assure you those wings cost me a great deal of money. How kind in Lady Heywood to take poor Dudley out of the way!"

In this manner she continued to babble on, till she took her departure, with a promise of returning the following day. But in the interim, she had caught cold by her visit to Woodlands, she said, which kept her at home; and Lady Waldegrave was seized with a nervous feverish attack, which confined her to bed. Slighted and neglected by the few attendants who remained, it

was Edith's part to nurse and tend her, which she did day and night with the most unremitting care and tenderness.

Florinda received many pretty little pink and blue billets from dear friends in town, who were dying to hear of her, and some even left cards of enquiry in the course of their morning's airing; but not one came to offer personal aid or sympathy. Lady Elizabeth seemed to think she had amply discharged her maternal duties by a single visit; for the next account of her was, that she had set off for Paris, where she said she would expect to hear from dear Florinda before proceeding to Rome, where it was absolutely necessary she should winter.

Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway had been kindly attentive, and done all in their power to promote the comfort of the wretched pair, thus thrown for the present on the resources of their friends. They were not ignorant of the rumours that were afloat concerning the cause of the duel; and without pretending to form a judgment one way or other, they had from the first agreed with Edith on the propriety of Lady

Waldegrave remaining where she was. She seemed now on the brink of a precipice, and a single false step might plunge her in irretrievable ruin. She had also abated much of the high tone which she had at first assumed, and it was evident she was willing to submit to at least the appearance of a reconciliation.

During this period, Sir Reginald had been making rapid progress towards recovery, as was learned from his medical attendants, for neither by word or deed had he taken the slightest notice of Lady Waldegrave. The time was now come, however, when some explanation must take place. He had been able for the first time to be moved into the study adjoining his dressing-room, and having stood that trial, he had declared his determination of being removed to town the following day. On receiving this information, Florinda appeared overwhelmed with surprise and mortification. It was evident from this that it was Sir Reginald's intention to abandon her—to leave her destitute, friendless—almost pennyless—with a stain upon her reputation which this desertion would render for ever indelible. In the

tumult of her feelings she wrote to him, but her letter was returned in a blank cover, unopened. When the first burst of passionate indignation at this insult had subsided, she besought Edith to see him, and learn from himself what his intentions were—to represent to him the sacrifice she had made in refusing to quit the house while he remained in it; and, finally, that it was the opinion of her family and friends, that no separation ought to take place at present. No office could be more revolting to Edith's feelings than the one she was thus called on to undertake—and by whom? By her who had so cruelly supplanted her in those affections which had once been her all. Was it indeed possible she was called upon to go a supplicant for favour to her now deserted rival? But Edith's pure and generous heart felt no base triumph at the thought—no unhallowed gleam of pleasure shone in her sad but pitying eyes, as she beheld the wretchedness of one who had wrought her so much woe!

Florinda's tears and entreaties prevailed over Edith's better judgment and finer feelings, and she sent to request an interview with Sir Regi-

nald. Only the purity and the rectitude of her intentions could have justified to herself the step she was now taking in thus interfering between those bound by so near and holy a tie—a tie which, when onee burst asunder, can never be hallowed and blest again!

It was with such painful and embarrassing feelings that Edith entered the apartment where Sir Reginald lay reclining on a sofa, pale and emaciated, with the languor of sickness and sorrow diffused over his form and features. He rose to receive her, his wounded arm suspended in a sling; and as he extended his hand to her, she shuddered as she thought how recently that hand had been uplifted to take away the life of another! Both were deeply affected, and for some minutes neither spoke. At length, making an effort, he said, "This is a kind visit, Edith, if I cannot say more——" His voice faltered, and he stopped.

"Do not say any thing on that subject," replied Edith gently; "it is enough that you believe it is kindly meant."

Sir Reginald pointed to an open letter, which

lay on the table before him; and, while wounded pride seemed to struggle with better feeling, he said, " Do you know from whence this came? Is it from Admiral Conway?"

Edith took the paper, on which was simply written, " A loan from an old friend." It contained bills to the amount of five hundred pounds; and, even through the attempted disguise of the hand, she recognised, with an emotion of surprise and pleasure, the writing of Mr Melcombe. " I am certain it is not from Admiral Conway," she said; " but there is a subject of greater interest I would speak to you of"——

" I am aware of all you have done," said Sir Reginald, " and I know you can mean nothing that is not good; but," added he, in increasing agitation, " the best intentions may be mistaken —they who mean well may be misled."

Edith hesitated to proceed, as she perceived him already prepared to deprecate the introduction of the subject on which she had come, and she remained silent and irresolute.

In a few minutes Sir Reginald, with more firm-

ness, said, " There is one subject, Edith, and only one, which I would not have you name to me—on any other say what you will."

" I will not affect to misunderstand you, Sir Reginald," said Edith; " there is a subject which you may well deem too delicate to be intruded upon. I feel it is so, and fain, very fain, I would be spared"——

" I believe you," replied Sir Reginald, bitterly; " the task is not one fitted for you."

" But I have undertaken it," said Edith, faintly.

" But you know not—you could not know—what it was you had undertaken; it has been imposed upon you by another."

" Be it so," said Edith, soothingly. " Can you blame that wife who would try every method to be reconciled to her husband?"

The cloud still deepened on Sir Reginald's brow as he said—" Yes, I blame the wife who, conscious of her own unworthiness, could stain the purity of another, by employing her to plead her cause."

" Then see and hear her plead her own cause,"

said Edith, earnestly, and with a deepening colour.

"Neither, and *never!*" answered Sir Reginald, sternly.

"Oh, in mercy say not so!—That is a fearful word; as you hope to be forgiven yourself, forgive her,—erring and imprudent she admits she has been, but in the face of Heaven, she attests her innocence." She paused, but Sir Reginald made no reply; she trusted that he was relenting, and went on: "Surely then you will not visit her errors thus harshly; you will not cast from you the being you vowed to love and protect. She is in sickness—in sorrow—your own Florinda! the mother of your boy! Ah, Reginald, surely you will not thus abandon her?"

"'Tis in vain!" answered Sir Reginald, with a convulsive gasp, and shading his face with his hand.

"Think how you once loved her!" said Edith, imploringly.

"You know how I did!" he replied, in a tone so deep and stern as thrilled to Edith's heart.

Tears rose to her eyes—she felt she could say no more.

Sir Reginald made another effort to regain his firmness, but his voice still faltered, when he said—"This is perhaps the only request I could have refused you, but I do refuse it; my happiness has been sacrificed, my confidence has been for ever destroyed, and 'tis in vain to strive to renew it." He paused, then resumed in a firm and decided tone: "When I go to town, arrangements shall be immediately made for a final separation. All that can be done for her comfort, shall be done on my part. Now, God bless you, Edith—will you not say as much for me?"

"Ah, Reginald," said Edith, as the tears dropt upon the hand which held hers, "the blessings which I would ask for you of God, are those which you would reject; but I do ask of Him," added she with fervour, "to bless you with the knowledge of Himself." They pressed each other's hands in silence, and parted—for ever!

There was more of indignation than sorrow in Lady Waldegrave's emotion, when made ac-

quainted with her husband's determination. The same day (having received a remittance from Sir Reginald) she set off for Paris to join Lady Elizabeth; and Edith returned to her dear friends at Oakly House, to await the arrival of the Ribleys.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The autumn was now far advanced; and even amid the pomp of groves, and garniture of fields, Edith sighed as she thought of that glorious effulgence which, at this season more especially, would be lighting up her own mountain land! Of those setting suns—not, as in softer climes, sinking gently and imperceptibly to rest, but retiring in the full majesty of a splendid retinue of gorgeous clouds, and even with their last rays imparting new beauty to the purple mountain, the green wave, and the grey rock. And oh! what thick-coming fancies—what visions of even earthly joy, were now associated in her mind with the thoughts of her Highland home!

The Admiral and Lady Arabella were aware of the attachment which had been formed between her and Melcombe; but they felt satisfied, when

they also learnt that it was when she should be in the midst of her nearest and dearest friends he was to return to claim her, and from their hands that he was to receive her. After repeated delays, the Ribleys at length arrived; and Edith, to the mutual regret of herself and her kind friends, bade them adieu, and returned once more to the Grove and the Mall. The delays had been occasioned by Mrs Ribley's illness; she had had several bilious attacks, and was still evidently far from being convalescent. She, nevertheless, relaxed nothing of her minute observances, but pursued her course of small, dull, frivolous occupations with unabated rigour.

"Been very near losing Kitty my dear!" said Mr Ribley, to Edith, with a shake of the head. "Sad thing, if I had lost Kitty my dear —eh?"

"You are very good, Mr Ribley," said his lady, gravely; "and it did occur to me, that, should you have been deprived of me, probably your best plan would have been, at a proper period, to have paid your addresses to our tried and excellent friend, Mrs Rose Popkin."

"Sure, my dear, if I didn't think the very same thing! Nice little woman, is Mrs Rose—pretty fortune of her own; and, sure, my dear, if it hadn't been for her, the water souchey would have been quite spoiled!"

Mrs Macauley had made many attempts to be permitted to return to her cottage, but in vain; all her efforts to extricate herself from Johnnie and his small people were fruitless. They had, one and all of them, discovered her value; and, while she remained within their reach, it was evident she would never be suffered to rest. Edith had gone to visit her as often as it was in her power, and had found her the inmate of a small, crowded, noisy dwelling, beset with spoiled, sickly children, hanging round her, clinging to her, leaning and sitting upon her in all directions. The effect of all this was beginning to be visible upon her—her neat straight back seemed bending, as if more from the weight of children than of years;—her cheeks were drawn down as if by the constant stroaking of fond hands;—her bright sunny eyes looked red and heavy, as if from want of sleep—and she said, she thought she

was getting a little deaf; but, maybe, it was only the din of the bairns, poor things! Altogether, she had got what Mrs Johnnie, in her dialect, called "a puled look." Edith, grieved to behold the ravages committed upon her dear old friend, by the concentrated affection of a whole family, prevailed so far as to have her brought to the cottage for a week or two previous to the time when the Ribleys were to remove to town.

"Oh, my dear!" said she, to Edith, as the first day of her return she sat in the little garden, basking in the mild rays of an autumnal sun,—"this is a cordial to my heart! and how thankful I ought to be—though I am not just so stout as I was—that I'm permitted to sit at my ease here, with all my senses about me! and, for as old as I am, to be able to watch the sun going down, and to smell the flowers, and to hear the birds sing. 'Deed, that sweet Robin red-breast puts me in mind of what I once read in an old book about it. And you know—though I'm no great reader—I never forget what I do read, which is a great mercy. 'As oft,' says he, 'as

I hear the Robin red-breast chaunt it as cheerfully in September, the beginning of winter, as in March, the approach of the summer, why should not we give as cheerful entertainment to the hoary frosty hairs of our age's winter, as to the primroses of our youth's spring? I am sent to the ant to learne industry; to the dove, to learne innocency; to the serpent, to learne wisdome; and why not to this bird, to learne patience and cheerfulnesse?' But, oh! my dear, where am I to go to learn something more particular of that fine creature that has gone away and left us?—Not a bit, if I'm any wiser than I was about him!—But you know who I mean, my darling, or your cheeks would not turn so red."

"Dear Macky! you will learn all in time—he will meet us at Inch Orran, when——" Edith could not proceed—emotion choked her utterance—she could only press her old friend's hands in silence, as she laid her head on her shoulder to hide the tears which were swimming in her eyes.

Mrs Macauley understood what was implied in this agitation, and she exclaimed, in rapture,

" 'Deed then, and it gives me new heart to hear it—and I'll bide my time patiently! Did not I always tell you he would turn out well? Not a bit I would wonder, if he was to turn out a Malcolm after all!"

In blissful anticipations of the great, though vague and shapeless things that were awaiting Glenroy's daughter, Mrs Macauley soon regained her usual health and animation. When the time arrived for the Ribleys' removal to town, she again resumed her place in Johnnie's family, but the period of her sojourn was to be short, as the winter was now advancing, and early in spring Captain Malcolm was to come in person to convey them once more to Inch Orran. Meanwhile, they both devoted themselves to the duties that had devolved upon them. There was at least more of variety and animation in Mrs Macauley's life, than in Edith's; for her sole employment was to bear Mrs Ribley company in her own apartment, to which she was chiefly confined. Certainly, if unfitness of minds in those who are condemned to associate closely together, be a species of torture, (as doubtless it is,)

Edith was sorely tried, but she bore it not only patiently, but cheerfully; in so much, that even Mrs Ribley's cold nature seemed thawing into something that could not be called affection, but was decided approbation.

Her health, however, now began to improve, and at length she was so much recovered, that Edith was permitted to spend a week or two occasionally with Lady Arabella, who seemed to have no fears of the contamination of the city communicating itself to Grosvenor Square.

At this time Edith received a letter from Lady Elizabeth from Rome, written in her usual style. The purport of it was, in the first place, to let her know that she had quarrelled with her daughter, who had gone to reside at Naples, and that she herself, feeling the want of a protector, was about to bestow her hand upon the Principe Pompolino; a very charming, talented person, though possessed of no fortune, and not particularly handsome. Sometime or another she hoped to make him known to dear Edith, who she was sure would admire him excessively.

Edith recollected having heard her mention

this same Principe more than once as a frightful, tiresome, little wretch, full of pretension, who was said to have married his first wife for her fortune, and then starved and beat her to death. Shocking and foolish! So much for the pleasing prospect that had allured to him a second. Edith felt really distressed at the folly of the infatuated old woman—and thought what emblems she and her daughter presented of the weak and beggarly elements of mere worldly advantages. As for Sir Reginald, he was living in Paris on the *débris* of his fortune, in a career of heartless, joyless amusement—still the slave of the world, even while he hated the chain which bound him to it.

From contemplations such as these, it was a relief, even to turn to Mr Ribley's transports of astonishment, disappointment, delight, and what not, as he announced one day the news he had just received. "Why, now, what do you think? Only guess—sure you never would! Refused Miss Mogg! And now, what do you think? going to be married—going to be married to a lady of quality! Refused Miss Mogg, and going to be married to a duke's daughter!!!

Why, now, only think of my being uncle-in-law to a duke's daughter! But, then, refused three hundred thousand pounds! Have it all in a letter from himself!" And he presented Edith with the letter he had received from Mr Penshurst, containing the intelligence of his being the accepted lover of the Lady Mary Morden; and concluding with a hope, that his uncle would enable him to make such settlements as the lady's rank rendered requisite. "Sure, now, Kitty, my dear, if he had but taken Miss Mogg, what a fortune there would have been! Four hundred and fifty thousand pounds! how comfortable for old Mogg and me to have put our money together—Wouldn't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"It would, indeed, Mr Ribley; but we must expect to meet with disappointments occasionally."

"All his own fault; but to think of his getting a duke's daughter—must settle handsomely upon her. Suppose we shall go to court, Kitty, my dear, eh? and be presented to their Majesties upon the occasion, eh, Kitty, my dear? Wonder what they will say to us?"

Edith was rejoiced to hear that Mr Penshurst

had got the better of his disappointment; and having heard Lady Arabella mention the lady's family in favourable terms, she trusted the marriage would prove a happy one. Mr Ribley soon became reconciled to the loss of Miss Mogg's fortune, in the splendour of this alliance; although his sensibilities were again awakened to the reality of the loss, when he soon after read in the papers, the marriage of the Most Noble the Marquis of Carlingford to Charlotte Augusta Mogg, only child of Mark Mogg, Esquire, of Myrtle Grove. "Sure, now, to think how Charles *could* refuse Miss Mogg, and she a Marchioness! Three hundred thousand pound, and a Marchioness! And, Kitty, my dear, to think of old Mogg being a dowager Marchioness!!!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was now the season when "the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land"—the season when Edith was to exchange the crowded streets, and stifling atmosphere of London, for the silent glens and free mountain air of her dear Highland home. Captain Malcolm came, and joyful was the meeting between him and his beloved *protégée.* Edith had much pleasure in introducing her dear and venerated guardian to her friends, the Conways—and the liking which took place was reciprocal. They promised to pay a visit at Inch Orran in the course of the summer, "When I hope to dance a Highland reel at a Highland wedding," whispered the Admiral, as he gave Edith a pa-

ternal embrace at parting. Mrs Ribley took a more formal adieu, but her words, though few, were to the purpose.

" In consideration," said she, " of the propriety with which you have conducted yourself while a member of this family, I think it proper to inform you, that in the event of my demise, I have, with Mr Ribley's concurrence, bequeathed to you one half of my fortune, at present vested in the three per cent consols."

" Good by—good by," said Mr Ribley; " better have staid with us—won't find Birch's turtle-soup in the Highlands—perhaps find turtles of another sort—no green fat upon them though—eh, Kitty, my dear?"

" 'Deed, I'm wae to leave this great world of brick and dust, after all," said Mrs Macauley, as she wiped her eyes, and turned her back on London, " when I think on the bits of childer that were so fond of me, and them all greetin', poor things, at my going away. Oh, surely that's one of the mercies of Providence, that wherever we go we'll find something to love, and somebody to love us. Do not you think so, my dear?—But

I beg your pardon, I had forgot that I was not to speak of that till the time comes."

Captain Malcolm smiled as he perceived the blush which the simplicity of her old friend called up on Edith's cheek, and doubted not but the cause would soon be revealed to Mrs Malcolm.

It was a joyous day when the little party arrived at Inch Orran. The bright sun—the silvery atmosphere—the blue waters—the tender green of the foliage just bursting from the bud; but far beyond all the loveliness of nature, were the glad faces, the fond tones, and the warm embrace of long-severed friends. Much was there to say and to tell on both sides; but, oh, how much more had Edith to conceal! Still, as she looked on the fair and happy band that surrounded her, one place seemed empty; still, amid all the loving looks that met hers, one look was wanting; amid all the sweet gay tones that rung in her ear, the sweetest of all was silent. When the first joyful excitement had subsided, and affection had returned to the natural flow of calm, social intercourse, it was then Mrs Malcolm remarked with surprise the change that had taken place in

Edith's manner. Instead of the calm, serene air which had formerly characterised her, she had now an anxious and abstracted look—or when roused from her reveries, it seemed only to agitation or embarrassment.

At times, she appeared as if oppressed with a weight more than she could bear; at others, a glow of pleasure would suddenly kindle on her cheek and sparkle in her eyes. Again, her half-opened lips seemed about to breathe the tale she longed to disclose; but as if recalled to sudden recollection, she would quickly fly from the social circle, and bury herself in solitude. Mrs Malcolm knew her too well, for a moment to suspect Edith could have any attachment she would blush to avow, and she waited patiently for some time in hopes she would disclose the mystery which seemed thus to be haunting her. But days passed on, and the symptoms of Edith's mental disquiet only became more striking. She seemed all eye and ear: the sight of a distant boat—the sound of a horse's feet—the entrance of a passing visitor—all startled and agitated her, as though they had been strange

and ominous events. At length her kind and gentle friend spoke as a tender mother would have done to the daughter she loved, and besought her to disclose the cause which was thus alienating her from the sympathies of all around. For some minutes Edith struggled with her emotion, but in vain; she could only throw herself into the arms of her friend, and yield to the passionate overflow of feelings, taxed almost beyond endurance.

At length she looked up, and the glow and the smile which shone through her tears told that a tale of happiness lay hid beneath this shrouded mystery. "Soon, very soon, all will be told," said she, as her bosom heaved with emotion; "and oh, may your heart be strengthened to bear it even as mine has been! But do not—do not ask me more." Mrs Malcolm had too much delicacy to press the subject farther. But she mused and pondered on these strange words, vainly seeking to elucidate their import.

A few days after this, as Edith sat at breakfast with the family party, a letter was brought to her, which a glance told was fraught with the

tidings she had so long panted to tell. With a heart throbbing with emotion, yet unable to articulate, she hastily rose, and with trembling limbs sought the privacy of her own chamber, ere she ventured to open it, and it was through a mist of blinding tears she traced its contents.

" Now, dearest Edith, the time is come when I may claim you as my own! To-morrow I shall be at Inch Orran—to-morrow I shall again behold the dear ones I so madly deserted. The concealment of nine long years will be at an end. But oh! how dearly bought has this happy day been to all! With what shame I now disclose the wild act of boyish romance which has so long divided us! Nine years ago, I returned a shipwrecked sea-boy to my home; but I learnt that my return would bring only poverty and ruin on all I loved. I saw them seemingly happy. I believed myself forgotten, and I resolved to sacrifice myself to the continuance of the happiness and prosperity of others. I fled, far from all I loved. In my delirium, I even rashly, impiously, bound myself by a solemn vow never

to reveal myself till the period arrived when I could give them a right to all the possessions they then enjoyed; but of which my return at that time would have stripped them. 'Tis to you, Edith, I commit my cause, to plead for me with the dear parents I so cruelly injured, by breaking the holy tie which should have bound me to them. But they will forgive me—you will be the link again to unite us. To your hands, then, I commit myself; to your discretion I trust the communication. Oh, how my heart has pined for this time, and how it feels overwhelmed at the very thought! My mother! pray for her, pray with her,—and pray, too, my first, my only love, for your

"RONALD MALCOLM."

"To-morrow!—Was it indeed so near?" And how prepare their hearts for the tide of joy which was about to rush in upon them? How call upon them to give up the dead which had so long lain shrouded there, and receive in exchange the living to their arms? O, no! it was not possible to prepare them for such a transition.

It was by no slow and gradual light the truth could be learned. One single ray must flash instantaneous conviction on their souls. It was this consciousness which had hitherto restrained her from all attempts at a gradual disclosure. If the idea once took possession of the mind, with nought to feed and sustain it but a baseless hope and vague surmise, it could only serve to fever and disturb the imagination. Better it were that nothing should be hinted till all could be told. But she must first still the tumult of her own heart, that she might find gentle access to those of others. While yet unable to compose her spirits sufficiently to venture on the allotted task, a gentle tap at the door was followed by the entrance of Mrs Malcolm, who, struck by the agitation of Edith's manner, and alarmed at her protracted absence, came to be satisfied if all were well. She looked with earnest enquiry on Edith's eloquent countenance, where all was struggling to reveal itself.

"Edith," said she, taking her hand, "your spirit seems strangely stirred. If it is with joy, you will surely share it with me. If it is grief

or anxiety, will you not suffer me to share it with you ?"

"Oh! it is something that differs from all," replied Edith, with emotion. "It *is* joy; but joy so strange—so"——

Mrs Malcolm looked at her with surprise. "It seems indeed strange, that *any* joy should with have such an effect upon you."

"No—oh no!—You would not say so if you knew—if you could guess."—Her heart throbbed violently, and her colour went and came with the quickness of lightning.

"Then, will you not tell me, my love, what it is that thus strangely moves you?" said her friend, soothingly.

After a struggle to repress her feelings, Edith succeeded. She became perfectly calm, but very pale, as she said,—"Do you remember when once we talked of happiness? I knew not then what it was—but I believed you happy." She stopped.

"Well, my love?" enquired Mrs Malcolm, in a tone of surprise.

"You said you were not," resumed Edith,

in a low, suffocated voice; "that wandering thoughts, wild dreams of . . . . of one . . . . of . . . ."

"Of my Ronald?" said Mrs Malcolm, mournfully. "Yes, long—too long—I struggled with the mingled feelings of despondency, and hope, and fear."

"You believed that he had perished?" said Edith, once more regaining her composure.

"At the end of thirteen years, could you wish me to doubt it?" said Mrs Malcolm, almost reproachfully.

"But you did once hope, even while you feared."

Mrs Malcolm sighed. "But now the hope and the fear are even, as he is—no more!"

"Hope never dies, it is said," rejoined Edith, with a beating heart.

Mrs Malcolm waved her head sorrowfully, and a sigh was her only answer.

"At least it may revive—return—with God all things are possible—He can loose the prisoner's bonds—He can set the captive free—He

can recall the dead to life—oh! He can make even the seas give up their dead!"

Struck with the trembling fervour of her tones, for a moment Mrs Malcolm regarded the deep glowing expression of Edith's countenance; then, as the sudden conviction flashed upon her, she wildly exclaimed, "My son! Oh, do not mock me! say"——

Edith opened her arms to receive her, and, while tears of rapture streamed from her eyes, she faintly articulated, "He lives!"

The mother uttered no cry—shed no tears—she stirred not—breathed not—but every fibre seemed as if stiffening into stone, while with pale lips, and fixed but vacant eye, she gazed wistfully upon Edith, as though she looked on some fearful and delusive thing.

"Will you not shed one tear, breathe one word of thanks to God?" said Edith, soothingly.

"For what?" enquired Mrs Malcolm, fearfully, as she laid her trembling hand on Edith's.

"For Ronald—who lives, and comes to bless and be blessed by you!"

At length the mother's tears did flow, and the fervent ejaculation broke from her lips! Then she called eagerly for her husband, for the dear partner of all her joys and sorrows, to share in the blest tidings; and Edith left them to the overflow of feelings, too sacred for aught but the eye of Heaven to witness. Soon the joyful tidings spread, and every where they were received with rapture, for Ronald's name and memory had ever been fondly cherished far and near. Lucy, her husband, and two lovely children, were hastily summoned to complete the happy group, that waited impatiently to welcome the wanderer's return. "To-morrow! the blest to-morrow! when, when would it come!"

Hours crept slowly along—hours?—years! ages, they seemed to those longing hearts, whose only cry was, "My son! my son!"

But these hours passed away, the day was drawing to a close, and now the evening was come—such an evening as that on which Ronald had torn himself from all he loved—calm, fair, and holy. There sat the mother even as then,

the glorious firmament and the glowing waters spread out before her; but her fervent eye was fixed with unvarying gaze on the going down of the sun, as though she sought to hasten its tardy course, by marking each lessening ray—that sun, whose next rising was to form a new epoch in her existence. And Edith was by her watching the course of a still distant boat, which was rowed swiftly along; its course was directed to Inch Orran. With varying colour she marked its progress—nearer and nearer it drew—it reached the point, and in an instant, with light step, one sprang on shore.

"'Tis he!" she exclaimed, starting up.

"'Tis Ronald! Ronald is come!" was the glad cry which broke from every lip.

> "Eager steps the threshold pressing,
> Open'd arms in haste advancing,
> Joyful looks through blind tears glancing;
> The gladsome bounding of his aged hound,
> Say he in truth is here! our long, long lost is found!"*

But no such manifestations of delight came

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* The Beacon.

from the mother, as she was clasped in the arms of her son; her joy was too deep for words, or looks, or outward tokens; and long she remained unconscious of whose were the arms that supported her—whose the warm tears that dropped upon her pale cheek! When at length by these fond cares recalled to consciousness, ah, what a gaze was that which dwelt upon those dear and cherished features—changed they might be to other eyes; but the look—the one look of her own child, what can efface that from the mother's heart? Still all seemed but as a dream, till, with his family and household assembled round him, she heard the father offer up to God his thanks for the recovery of his long-lost son—that the gift was acknowledged with tears of pious gratitude to Him, the giver of every good and perfect gift!

The Admiral kept his word—Lady Arabella and he came to Inch Orran to witness the celebration of a Highland wedding. Benbowie also was forthcoming, in a waistcoat ten times more conspicuous than ever. "That was very true, on my conscience, that was very true what you

said of the grazings," said he to Mrs Macauley, as though he had been ruminating on it ever since; "and I've brought a thousand pound for a tocher to Glenroy's daughter."

"Ah, Benbowie, that is like you; but 'deed you've been rather long of thinking of it, for Providence has been as kind to her as to the little bee that it feeds from dew and clouds; and now there's the sunshine and the flowers, and she wants for nothing."

The marriage of Ronald and Edith was blessed by the venerable Mr Stewart; and the Admiral and Mrs Macauley danced a Highland reel, with great spirit, in honour of it. Thus, when it was ended, she communed with her partner upon the event—"Oh, what curious creatures we are! To think if Glenroy was to look up, what would he say to see his dochter the wife of Ronald Malcolm, after all! Not a bit but he was very near casting out with me once, for *evenin'* her to such a thing! Oh, should not that make us humble and trustful, when it is shown to us poor, blind craaters, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps? And to see how

beautifully it is appointed to us as to the naatral creation, to have our tribulations and our consolations, if we would but look to the hand that sends them! for, as the old Hieland distich says, (but as you do not understand Gaelic, I must give it to you in English,)

> "There is neither knoll nor rising,
> Nor yellow (green) grassy hillock,
> That will not for a space of time be joyous,
> And for a while be sad and tearful."

THE END.

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